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Byzantium and France: the Twelfth Century Renaissance and the Birth of the Medieval Romance

Leon Stratikis
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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Leon Stratikis entitled "Byzantium and France: the Twelfth Century Renaissance and the Birth of the Medieval Romance." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Modern Foreign Languages.

Paul Barrette, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

James E. Shelton, Patrick Brady, Bryant Creel, Thomas Heffernan

Accepted for the Council:
Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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BYZANTIUM AND FRANCE: THE TWELFTH-CENTURY RENAISSANCE AND THE BIRTH OF THE MEDIEVAL ROMANCE

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Leon Stratikis

December 1992

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents for their inspiration over the years of my studies, and their expectations which kept me going even at the most difficult times.

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This work would not have been possible without the diligent and enthusiastic support of my advisor, Prof. Paul Barrette, who read my manuscript several times and met with me regularly commenting on my findings and always broadening my view with other recommended sources. I would also like to thank the members of my committee, Profs. Patrick Brady, James Shelton, Thomas Heffernan and Bryant Creel, for each bringing their own expertise and insight to this work with their helpful suggestions, and for their willingness to accommodate graduate school deadlines on short notice. I would also like to thank Linda J. Besl and Ann Lacava, without whose generous assistance in editing I may not have mastered Word Perfect commands in time for graduation. Finally, this work could not have been written without the excellent resources of the University of Tennessee library, and the supplemental assistance of the Library of Congress, the Newberry Library, Dumbarton Oaks, and the Greek library at the University of Cincinnati.

ABSTRACT

This work hopes to fill the need for a complete treatment of the question of possible influence of the Hellenistic and Byzantine romance on the Old French romance of the twelfth century. Adopting a traditional historical approach, along with a consideration of symbols and motifs, it hopes to trace the coherent development of a genre from the Hellenistic world of the beginning of our era to the religious milieu of early Christianity and ultimately to the translation centers of monasteries and ports and the courts of Western Europe at the time of the Crusades. We conclude that, far from composing their works in a vacuum, inspired only by half-forgotten, obscure Celtic tales, the twelfth-century authors were part of a tradition whose presence helps to account for some puzzling motifs in their works.

PREFACE

In recent years, the validity of the historical approach to literature has come into question. The works of Michel Foucault, particularly *The Archeology of Knowledge* and *The History of Sexuality*, emphasize the alleged weaknesses of the historical method and the need for a structuralist approach to historical phenomena. According to Foucault, the concepts of tradition and influence obscure our understanding of individual historical moments by fitting them into a pattern which may be arbitrary. However, while it is true that sweeping generalizations not based on rigorous research may reduce individual moments, events, and texts to what Foucault derisively terms "reminders to our general unconscious", strictly formalist approaches to documents, whether historical or literary, do not allow for a proper context. Thus, a formalistically biased approach to historical or literary documents is just as biased as a strictly anti-formalistically biased approach. No work is created in a vacuum, and no work can be fully appreciated in one.

This observation is particularly relevant to the literature of Medieval Europe, which German literary historians, and particularly E. Curtius, view as, by definition, an inter-disciplinary field. Whereas it is the general academic practice to study particular national literatures (and the Medieval counterparts from which they arose) and relegate the study of international influence to a secondary, "comparative" field, Medieval scholars, since the 18th century, have realized that the authors of the works in their particular field of specialization were aware of contemporary works in different languages, some of which they would translate or freely adapt. Their borrowings from contemporary works were

far greater than those of any age since, and they drew freely from the wealth of classical sources, available in Latin or Greek, proud of imitation and oblivious to the modern stigmatization of plagiarism. For medievalists, therefore, modern structuralist methods do not replace traditional approaches, but rather enhance them. According to Eugene Vance,

> "There is nothing more historically or culturally determined than the conviction among modern linguists that their discourse is ahistorical and [there is] a growing awareness of this paradox... Critics today who address themselves to the discourses of medieval texts have interesting alternatives before them: whether to confine themselves to a historical perspective, whether to cast their lot with modern analytical techniques, or whether to draw on the insights of both."[1]

We agree with the author of that statement that the third alternative, if employed lucidly and coherently, is the best.[2] In that context, the study of tradition and influence is not only relevant but essential to a full understanding of the works involved: it is not possible to arrive at such a full appreciation of the text by studying only the text itself, if it incorporates borrowings from other texts or allusions which only History can clarify. And although new studies of anthropology and folklore suggest new interpretations or contribute to the full picture, they can only be put in their proper perspective by their placement within the framework of history. Northrop Frye's observation in *The Secular Scripture* of the universality of romance serves to underline the importance of the study of tradition:

"The conventions of prose romance show little change over the course of

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[1]Eugene Vance, *Marvelous Signals,* (Lincoln, 1986), p. 153.

[2]Ibid.

> centuries, and conservatism of this kind is the mark of a stable genre. In Greek romances we find stories of mysterious births, oracular prophecies about the future contortions of the plot, foster parents, adventures which involve capture by pirates, narrow escapes from death, recognition of the true identity of the hero and his eventual marriage with the heroine. We open, let us say, *Guy Mannering* [Scott], written fifteen centuries later [it was thought at the time that the earliest Hellenistic romances dated from the third century A.D.], and we find that, although there are slight changes in the setting, the kind of story being told, a story of mysterious birth, oracular prophecies, capture by pirates, and the like, is very much the same. In Greek romance the characters are Levantine, the setting the Mediterranean world, and the normal means of transportation is by shipwreck. In science fiction the characters may be earthlings, the setting the intergalactic spaces, and what gets wrecked in hostile territory a spaceship, but the tactics of the storyteller generally conform to much the same outlines."[3]

Another natural modification of the practice of modern literary analysis, when dealing with Medieval works, is the restitution of a stress on the relationship between genesis and content when studying an incomplete text, such as Chrétien's *Perceval,* whose meaning is obscured by its fragmentary nature. It is only possible to attempt a hypothetical reconstitution of the complete work through understanding the forces at work not only in the completed portion of the work, but also in the projected portion, a circumstance which must of necessity lead us into that shadowy realm of the author's conception of the work which, granted, can never be fully known, and which may indeed be irrelevant to the final product. If, however, we might hope even to approach an understanding of the fragment, we must approach it through an understanding of context and influences.

It is our hope in this present work to adapt the techniques of the historian to the

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[3]Northrop Frye, *The Secular Scripture,* (Cambridge, 1976) pp. 4-5.

blooming of French literature in the twelfth century, and to broaden our knowledge of the field by studying the little-emphasized and sometimes downplayed contacts between the Frankish, Germanic and Latin peoples of Western Europe and the Byzantines of the East. Although numerous works on Western saints' lives, romances, epics, etc. mention in passing possible sources in the East, we shall break new ground by attempting an all-encompassing evaluation of Hellenistic and Byzantine elements in Western Romance. In the general Occidental fascination with things Byzantine -- from the exoticism of the Court to the traditions of Classical Greece -- we shall attempt to trace specific literary links and show the inter-relationship of Classical, Hellenistic, Byzantine and Old French literatures, which, taken together, form the basis of what we read as our modern, Western novel. Our journey will span a continent, a millennium, and several disciplines. In the end, it is our hope that our appreciation for the Old French texts is not weakened by our associations, but enriched and strengthened by knowledge of the environment and tradition from which they apparently sprang. Moreover, we sincerely wish that, even if our readers are not convinced on all of the points of similarity we might make, or if we should be criticized for inadequately treating certain opposing views, they will at least see, in the connections we draw between the literatures of Europe, a recognition of the importance of viewing literature not in the nationalistic plural, but in the unified singular. Finally, if our work inspires even in a handful of readers of French romances a curiosity to read Byzantine romances, if it inspires only one scholar to do a careful comparative study of one Byzantine work and its possible influence on an Old French counterpart, or if, when our reader thinks of "romance", he no longer thinks only in terms of "any work

written in a romance vulgate" but also thinks of the works of the proud people who, through the Middle Ages, still called themselves "Romans", then our time and effort have been well spent.

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Knoxville, Tennessee 1992

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INTRODUCTION

A puzzling matter for medieval literary historians is the question of how the Hellenistic world and Byzantium might have influenced the development of the romance in France during the twelfth century. Some works, especially those of E. M. Jeffreys, have attempted to compare Byzantine and Western romances which arose simultaneously in the twelfth century, and have been particularly inspirational to our present work. Others attribute romanesque motifs to the Saints' Lives, which in turn are traced back to earlier hellenistic romances. Still others deal with the general reception of primarily religious works from the Byzantine East in the Latin West, while others attempt to explain individual motifs, such as the Grail, through Eastern ceremonial.

Treated individually, these approaches prove less than satisfactory: although some motifs, such as the god of love or the mysterious castle, appear in the literature of East and West at the same time, the Byzantine romance is much closer to its Hellenistic roots than is the Western romance. Some motifs, like the recognition story, are clearly passed on from the Hellenistic romance to the Apocrypha, the Saints' Lives, and finally the twelfth-century romance, while other motifs seem to originate in ceremonies, particularly the rituals of death and resurrection which, from their mystery cult origin, still survive in the liturgy of the Orthodox church.[4]

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[4]A further caveat to our investigation is the simultaneous existence of what we hold to be Hellenistic motifs in different contexts: as material entering Judaism, the Roman church, the Arabic or Eastern sources, etc. Although we must be aware as we proceed that our path contains a number of downplayed or unmentioned tributaries, and moreover, that our central motifs -- recognition, death and resurrection, etc., -- may be attributable

A systematic survey of all the evidence, however, clearly promotes a theory of progressive development which shows the debt that the Old French romance owes to Byzantium. Instead of establishing one source of direct influence, we therefore attempt to form a composite, consisting of 1) transmission of motifs from the Hellenistic romance, through Christianity, to the West, 2) direct transmission of romance elements through translations in the overlapping region of Southern Italy, 3) the influence of Byzantine ceremonial observed first by ambassadors and later by Crusaders, and 4) the mutual influence of the new works in the romance genre in both East and West.

Invaluable guides in our work are in particular the studies of Beaton on the Byzantine romance, Berschin on Greek learning and ecclesiastical translation in the West, dePater and Hägg on understanding the Hellenistic world and the Hellenistic romance, Delehaye and Elliott on the hagiographic links between the Hellenistic romance and that

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to human nature in general, not being the heritage of any particular culture, nevertheless, it is fruitful to consider the one possible avenue of direct influence that permits the tracing of such broad and profound themes throughout the entire pre-history of what we regard as the novel, from late antiquity to the middle ages. Indeed, the fact remains, that out of the cultural and religious syncretism of the Hellenistic world, there arose a fictional genre, complete in its techniques, style, and content, which can be pinned down as a milestone in the history of literature. Moreover, with the development of this genre circumscribing perfectly the advent of Christianity -- ca. 200 B.C. to 300 A.D. -- this starting point to our investigation certainly makes sense as the direct and integral ancestor of any romances written during the Christian era. We do not wish to be flippant in dismissing any other avenues of influence -- the Orient, Judaism, etc. -- but their disparate elements go beyond the limits of our thesis and will have to be the subject of separate investigations. Although our result must inevitably mingle conjecture and fact, it is our belief that, taken as a whole, this work will point out certain incontestable links between the Hellenistic and Western romances; moreover, the success of our theory will not be based on its exclusive authority, but on its merit as one possible, and often overlooked, avenue of influence which permits the literature of the Middle Ages -- and even of our own age for that matter -- to be understood in a broader context.

of the twelfth century, J.D. Bruce for his detailed analysis and commentary on the twelfth-century romance, and Burdach, Holmes, and Diverres for casting the Arthurian romance in the appropriate context of Crusading and Byzantine contacts. No work until the present, however, has attempted to study the entire question of possible influences and to suggest a theoretic model connecting the various pertinent literary works. The creation of this context will be the purpose of the present study.

We shall begin at the francophile Byzantine court of Manuel Comnenus, where we shall examine the new Byzantine romances which the Crusaders might have encountered; from there, we shall proceed to trace the origins of these romances to the Hellenistic works which, a millennium before, offered a direct prototype. While in the Hellenistic world, we shall examine the philosophical, religious and social background shaping these romances, and the elements adopted by Christianity.

Tracing the continuity of motifs from the Hellenistic world to early Christianity, Apocrypha and Saints' Lives, we shall consider the transmission of these lives to the West, as well as the translation of Hellenistic romances and other works in Late Antiquity and, in a more sporadic fashion, during the Middle Ages, and even the transmission of religious and mystical concepts, for example the mysticism of Pseudo-Dionysus during the Carolingian Renaissance or the concept of love of the Bogomils a bit later. Closer to the twelfth century, we shall consider the general opening to the East through embassies, marriages, a land route, and especially the direct contact of East and West in Norman Sicily.

Finally, the Crusades will provide the last piece to the puzzle, which will suggest

a free, common market of ideas, stretching from Byzantium to France, which may explain the reappearance of the Romance nearly simultaneously at the two extremes of Europe in the twelfth century. Beginning with the Byzantinesque *Romans d'Aventure,* we shall then trace elements of the Hellenistic and Byzantine romance to the Old French *Romans d'Antiquité* and even to the Arthurian romance. We shall even attempt to solve the mystery of the Grail through the context of our theory. Finally, we shall conclude by turning our theory of influence around and considering briefly the possible influence of the Old French romance on the Byzantine romance beginning with the Frankish occupation of Greece after the calamitous Fourth Crusade.

By studying these aspects of the East-West question, we seek to discover a definite pattern which, if not positively conclusive, will certainly help us understand the origins of the romance and ultimately of the modern novel. And, although we have used numerous guides along the way, it is our hope that the composite picture we present throws new light upon the subject, which will inspire further work in the comparative field of the early development of the romance.

CHAPTER I.

ALIENOR AND MICHAEL: THE VISIT

1. Alienor and Louis VII visit Constantinople during the Second Crusade.

In the late summer of 1147, the Golden Gate of Constantinople opened for some most unusual visitors. The king of France, Louis VII, and his young, ambitious queen, Alienor of Aquitaine, would enjoy the hospitality of Emperor Michael VII Comnenus and Empress Irene, before they continued on the way to the Holy Land to reinforce the knights of the First Crusade, who had captured and then lost Jerusalem to the Turks. Ironically, these Crusades, which would cripple Constantinople, through the sack of 1204, leaving her easy prey for the Turks, were proclaimed in the West by Pope Urban II to reinforce Eastern Christianity, and the Byzantine Empire, against the Saracens.

Relations between East and West had not been at their best in recent years; a mutual excommunication between Patriarch Michael and the Pope in 1054 had followed on the development of a series of doctrinal differences. Moreover, Robert Guiscard, the Norman conqueror of Southern Italy, and his brother Roger, conqueror of Sicily, although reinstating Byzantine priests to the previously Muslim island, after Emperor Romanus II Diogenes suffered a staggering defeat against the Turks in Manzikert (1071), did not take long to declare their own war on Byzantium. Robert Guiscard defeated the new emperor, Alexius Comnenus, at Durazzo in 1081, but, after returning to Italy, died on the island of Cephalonia before he could launch a second attack (1074). Relations with the Roman

church were patched up enough in the subsequent decades for Alexius to ask her help against the Turks, but strong mistrust remained, particularly since Bohemund, son of Roger of Sicily, was one of the leaders of the Crusades.

Thus, when the knights of the official First Crusade gathered at Constantinople at the heels of Peter the Hermit's rabble in 1097, Alexius saw that they were treated well but did not permit them into the city in groups of more than six. He made a pact with the Crusaders whereby they would yield any reconquered cities to him as their lord in exchange for supplies and support; the agreement lasted as far as the reconquest of Nicaea, the closest city in Asia Minor, but then, as Alexius expected, Bohemund found an excuse to keep Antioch, and all subsequent reconquered territory, including Jerusalem, was turned into Latin kingdoms. Interesting for our later purposes, on this First Crusade, the troops were encouraged by the alleged discovery of Longinus' Lance after a vision of St. Andrew.[5]

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[5]Elizabeth Hallam, *Chronicles of the Crusades*, (New York, 1989), pp. 59-114. Paul Magdalino does not see the mutual mistrust as all negative, but rather as an indication that the two civilizations were clearly conscious of each other: "the ecclesiastical schism between Greek East and Latin West... deepened in a context of growing, not diminishing, contacts at all social levels, [between]... two successor civilisations of the Roman Empire growing out of antiquity ... parallel and in touch with each other... [through] equivalence and reciprocity".(Paul Magdalino, *The Perception of the Past in Twelfth-century* Europe, (London, 1992), pp. xii-xiii.)

2. Misunderstandings and Mutual Appreciation between Franks and Greeks; Chronicles and Epics of the Crusades.

At the time of Alienor's arrival, misunderstandings still persisted between Franks and Byzantine Greeks. The Germans who had just passed through the empire had had a skirmish with the Byzantines over the Crusaders' treatment of merchants; still, they received a warm reception since King Conrad and Emperor Michael were kin through marriage. When the Franks approached Constantinople, Byzantine towns closed their gates before them, selling supplies by lowering them on ropes. Nevertheless, the atmosphere of mistrust of Alexius' court a half century before had considerably moderated, so that the royal couple was greeted warmly by the Emperor as it passed the Walls of Theodosius, the most formidable in all 11th- century Europe though built in the 5th century, through the Golden Gate, and traveled along the Triumphal Way. They crossed the Forum of Arcadius, the Forum Bovi, the Forum Tauri, and the Forum of Constantine, and finally arrived at the splendid Augusteon, where they were surrounded by the splendor of the Hippodrome, the Hagia Sophia Cathedral of Justinian, and the Boukoleon Palace.

The new emperor was fascinated by Western customs, astrology and the supernatural; he had married a Western princess, and attended jousts at his Hippodrome, "often entering the arena of the Hippodrome in order to participate personally."[6] At the

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[6]Deno Geanakopoulos, *Interaction of the 'Sibling' Byzantine and Western Cultures*, (Cambridge, Mass, 1962), p.11.

beginning of the next century, this emperor is remembered fondly in Robert de Clari's account of the conquest of Constantinople by the Franks and Venetians. Robert calls Manuel "richest of all the Christians who ever were, and the most bountiful". He relates an anecdote where this emperor liked his Latin subjects and visitors so much that whenever one came to an audience he would not leave without a hundred marks from the emperor. His Greek subjects grew so jealous that they asked him to expel the Latins from the empire. So, Manuel devised a ruse: he pretended to send the Latins away, but had them stand by in battle formation. He told the Greeks that they could now easily surprise and liquidate them, and rode at their head as if to attack. When the Greeks saw the Latin battlelines, they ran. Then said Manuel:

> "Sirs, now can it well be seen whom one ought to trust. Ye fled away when ye ought to have aided me, and ye left me all alone, and if the Latins had so wished, they might have cut me all in pieces. But now do I command that no one of you be so bold or so daring that he ever again speak of my bounty, nor of the love that I bear the Franks; for verily do I trust them more than you, and therefore will I give them more than I have yet given them."[7]

Indeed, the author of a phrasebook for twelfth-century Crusaders traveling through Byzantium, which is preserved at Auxerre, must have had the generosity of this emperor in mind when, along with a list of useful phrases for greeting, asking directions, provisions, arms, implements, animals, parts of the body, and days of the week, he offers the following useful phrases: *"Ti aquis to ape to vasilio romeco? Ti pissem vasilios? Francis calom. Ti calo docem? Piola lacotina que armata.* (What is the news about the

[7]Robert de Clari *Chronicle,* in Edward Noble Stone, *Three Old French Chronicles of the Crusades,* (Seattle, 1939), pp. 182-3.

Greek emperor? What is he doing? He is kind to the Franks. What good things does he give them? Much money and weapons.)"[8]

The Western praise for Manuel's generosity is a far cry from the burlesque treatment of East and West relations in the humorous *Pilgrimage of Charlemagne*, in which the Frankish knights, in ominous foreshadowing of the turn of the next century, would back up their boasts with nasty tricks at the expense of the Byzantine Court.[9]

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[8]Bernhard Bischoff, "Greek Letters in the Latin Middle Ages", *Speculum* 36 (1961), 219. One modern Greek author, Ange Vlachos, looks back to the Comnenian period as the last manifestation of Byzantine glory, although he gives less credit to Manuel personally as an able leader. According to the preface for Vlachos' novel, *Their Most Serene Majesties*, whose fictional tone permits any slight exaggeration, "The Comneni were truly the last Emperors of Byzantium. John, [Anna Comnena's brother, was] an excellent Emperor, a wise and austere ruler, [who] consolidated the inheritance bequeathed to him by his father, Alexius. Manuel, a sovereign who was obsessed by grandeur, squandered the resources of the Empire in campaigns glorious and inglorious, but always futile; upon his death, he left the realm in a lamentable state. Andronicus, a cruel tyrant, did at least attempt, at the eleventh hour, to restore the Empire to its former greatness, with the love of the people as his main support. Some years after the death of Andronicus, Constantinople was captured by the Franks. During the Restoration, the Lascari, the Angeli, and the glorious Paleologi were Emperors in name only; in reality, they were merely vassals of the Seltzuks of Inconium or of various western sovereigns, and they wielded insignificant power over a very limited geographical area." (Ange Vlachos, *Their Most Serene Majesties,* (New York, 1964), pp. 11-12.)

[9]The Italian origin of this hybrid epic-romance, without the proper background, may seem curious, particularly in light of the traditional view, reflected by Saintsbury about the beginning of Italian literature at the Sicilian court of Roger II: "In the earliest Italian, or rather Sicilian poetry,... the influence of the literature of France... is quite certain and incontestable."(384) Nevertheless, Ker cites an earlier Italian source for this prototype of the romance: "An Italian history in the tenth century tells of the expedition of Charlemagne to Jerusalem, and how he bridged the passage between Italy and Greece. Lieutprand tells about the remarkable furniture of the Imperial house at Constantinople; the rich things there came to be reckoned among the wonders of the world, and gave ideas to many authors of romance [including those of the *Perceval* romance and its continuations]. The French poem of the pilgrimage of Charlemagne is not affected by the crusade, and must have been composed before it."(*Dark Ages* 350) Indeed, the trappings of this romance will be part of the Byzantine heritage transmitted to the West during the

This mistrust reflected in the *Pilgrimage* also figures prominently in the Byzantine segment of the epic *Chanson d'Antioche* of Richard the Pilgrim. In this work, the Frankish knights arriving at Constantinople are first mistaken for infidels. Subsequently, the mistrustful Emperor Alexius first threatens to slay them, and then orders that they not be allowed any nourishment:

> "Dites a mes bourgeois qu'on cache le pain,
> Qu'on refuse de vendre l'avoine et le blé.
> Si l'on en vend pour deux deniers, il n'y aura pas de rançon,
> Celui qui l'aura fait sera écartelé."[10]

Although the account is told from the French point of view, both sides demonstrate their mistrust, and the Franks their barbarism. The Emperor's nephew describes the Frankish knights, who are ready to shed Christian blood as readily as Moslem:

> "Il y a là de riches barons de France
> Qui désirent plus la guerre qu'un damoiseau sa mie...
> Ils jurent le Seigneur, le Fils de Marie,
> Que s'ils n'ont pas de vivres la cité sera détruite.
> S'ils vous prennent par force et par un siège,
> Ils feront justice de vous, je vous le dis sans mentir."[11]

Even more critical is Ambrose's early chronicle *L'Estoire de la Guerre Sainte* of 1196, where the Greeks are indistinguishable from the Saracens. In this chronicle, the

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Middle Ages; as to the seemingly curious transmission of the plot through Italy, this will be appreciated in the context of the Norman court, at its proper place.

[10]Louis-Claire Beaupoil Sainte-Aulaire, ed., *La Chanson d'Antioche*, (Paris, 1862), pp. 54-55.

[11]Ibid., pp. 55-56.

Crusaders of Richard the Lionhearted first encounter Greeks in Messina while awaiting passage to the Holy Land. He characterizes them as "false and full of madness": "the people thereof found we an evil folk... the Grecian rabble of the city... railed at our pilgrims; they thrust their fingers in their eyes to mock us, and called us stinking dogs. Every day did they evil entreat us and murdered our pilgrims and cast them into draught-houses, which deeds were proved against them."[12] Things get worse once the Crusaders arrive in Cyprus, where they encounter Isaac Comnenus, Emperor of Byzantium.[13] According to Ambrose, Isaac was a traitor "more false than Judas or Ganelon... Saladin's privy friend was he, and the Christians had he deserted; and it was said in sooth that, to plight their alliance each had drunk of the other's blood; thereafter, this was known of a certainty."[14] Isaac, a member of the Byzantine royal family who, during the convoluted intrigues of the period, managed to stake a claim to the island of Cyprus as his kingdom, is cast as a coward unwilling to joust with King Richard, and a villain scheming to steal his ships. The subsequent fighting with the Greeks who "like dogs howled at us", is described in unforgiving terms, as though the Latin host were fighting the Infidel: "so many of the foe did [the Crusaders] slay or take captive (to make no mention of them that basely fled) that no man ever knew the number of the dead."[15]

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[12]Ambrose, *Chronicle,* in Stone, *Three Old French Chronicles*, p. 18.

[13]Incidentally, the alleged incidents of the stay on Cyprus are ignored in Robert de Clari's summary of the Third Crusade. This may be an effort by the apologist of the Fourth Crusade to avoid casting Western treatment of Byzantines in a worse light than the sacking of Constantinople already implies.

[14]Ambrose *Chronicle,* p. 29.

[15]Ibid, p.32.

Despite the variety of purpose (from entertainment to documentation) of the three works mentioned, the epic of the Charlemage pilgrimage, the Song of Antioch and Ambrose's chronicle, and their range from pure fiction to alleged fact, they accurately demonstrate the dichotomy in Western views of Byzantium. The aesthetic of the chivalric code already established in the West allowed for delicacy of feeling and appreciation of luxury -- as in the descriptions of the splendid palaces of Constantinople, or even in Ambrose's case awe at the fineries captured from the hated Greeks: "they gleaned great foison of rich and goodly golden and silver plate that the emperor had in his tent where it was pitched, his harness, his own bed, and silken stuffs and stuff of purple dye, horses and mules laden as for the market, hauberks and helms and swords which the Grecians had thrown away, oxen and kine, nimble and stubborn goats, rams, ewes, and lambs, mares and foals sleek and fat, capons and hens and cocks, plums mules with embroidered cushions on their backs, raiment fine and curious and goodly steeds... silver pots and kettles,... golden cups and bowls,... rich and precious stones possessing virtue against diseases,... scarlet and... silken stuff (such as I have never seen in any other place where I have been)..."[16] The Basileus, the Eastern Emperor, could be idealized as the most splendid ruler in the universe, if not in the supernatural sense of a spiritual leader, as perceived generally by the Byzantines, or even, as Paul Magdalino interprets the Byzantine romance *Ysminias and Ysmine,* as the allegorical demi-god Eros the King.[17]

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[16]Ambrose, *Chronicle,* in Edward Noble Stone *Three Old French Chronicles*, pp. 32, 37.

[17]Paul Magdalino, *The Perception of the Past in Twelfth-century Europe*, p. 149.

The Western aesthetic, however, also encouraged military prowess and brute force against a perceived enemy. As Armel Diverres, the Byzantine Emperor was also the King of the smybolic Grail Kingdom, whose conquest would be the object of a Western adventure.

Thus it was possible, despite the mistrust between two civilizations for the most part isolated by Vandalic, Gothic and Slavic invasions for nearly a thousand years (and to some extent rivals for the crown of Emperor of Christendom), for them to resent one another despite the supposed common bond of Christian brotherhood, at the same time to borrow what was best in each land's art and culture and bring it back the other. Ironically, the artistic borrowing of one century would turn into the unrestrained looting of the next. On the one hand, the luxuries introduced to the West by the Crusaders would, in fact, have such an impact that they would spark voyages of exploration and even the "discovery" by westerners of the New World. On the other, competition for trade between East and West would bring about the fall of Constantinople. But more on this later.

3. Queen Alienor's Fascination for Byzantine Luxuries.

Queen Alienor was so fascinated by Byzantium that Louis decided to leave Constantinople as soon as possible lest his Queen forget their Holy Mission. Had he known the future, he would have tolerated her flirtation with Byzantine culture better than her subsequent flirtation in Antioch, which would bring about the ruin of the royal marriage. Later, in one of history's bizarre parallels, Emperor Manuel and King Louis

would die during the same year. In any case, while in Constantinople, Alienor's taste for fineries was more than satisfied; "Eleanor acquired a taste for Byzantine clothes and it was probably she who brought back to France such fashions as bulbous turbans, tall, pointed hats, and shoes like the beaks of birds."[18] Most significantly, her return from the Crusade, despite the estrangement from her spouse due to the unfortunate events in Asia Minor and the failure of the mission, was fruitful in inspiring at her court the composition of the first Courtly Romances. Our immediate question, which has been treated to some extent by E. and M. Jeffreys, is what literary works the queen and the poets of her entourage could have encountered in Byzantium, granted through the mirror of court translators, and how these works could have stimulated the imagination of the Western troubadours and *trouvères*.

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[18]Desmond Seward, *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, (New York, 1979), p. 45.

CHAPTER II.

YSMINIAS AND YSMENE: THE BYZANTINE ROMANCE

1. Resumption of Romance Writing and the "Proto-romance" Digenis

After a lapse of nearly a thousand years, the Byzantine poets of Michael's court had begun once again creating romances on the models of Hellenistic Greece.[19] Until

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[19]Paul Magdalino offers an intriguing explanation for this phenomenon, with implications for the linkage of East and West, and the simultaneous rise of the romance genre in both locations at once. According to Magdalino's theory, the Byzantines had for centuries neglected their Greek roots, due most likely to their reservations about the Pagan religions and democratic governments of Ancient Greece. By the eleventh and twelfth centuries, however, this attitude changes, as a function of the general "renaissance" of antiquity which transcends borders, as Western powers also begin to show their appreciation for antiquity.

Suddenly Byzantine authors begin to show their appreciation of Ancient Greece once more; "with the letters of Michael Psellos in the eleventh century, we begin to see hints of romantic antiquarianism."(Paul Magdalino, *The Perception of the Past in Twelfth-century Europe*, p. 143). Eustathios upholds classical drama as opposed to the *degeneration* of drama into hypocrisy, and praises the mixed government of Venice, which contains democratic elements. Stephen Skylitzes, Theodore Prodromos' teacher, praises democracy on the local level despite his overt emperor worship. Glykas dates accurately the ancient philosophers in his history, and Psellos, Phokas, Anna Comnena, and others describe the ruins of antiquity. Like the poem of Michael Chioniates, the Metropolitan of Athens, the writers of the period finally express their nostalgia for an Ancient Greece which is now lost, but which, through their efforts, might somehow be re-constituted:

> "Alas, all that I suffer, say and describe;
> dwelling in Athens, I see Athens nowhere,
> only drab dust and empty blessedness.
> All is gone now and suitable for myths,
> trials, judges, courts, votes, and laws,
> orations, persuasive eloquence of rhetors,
> councils, festivals, and expeditions
> both of the infantry and of the navy,

recently, these romances were generally neglected by Modern Greek scholars as anachronistically archaic and by comparative scholars as slavish imitations. As an extension of the Hellenistic romance in the age of the roman courtois, however, they form the crucial link between the romance of Antiquity and the Medieval romance, the immediate ancestor to our novel. Our discussion follows Roderick Beaton.

The "Greek" romance in its twelfth century Byzantine form was a popular genre in the Byzantine world and particularly at the court of Constantinople, as attested by the numerous manuscripts. Its prototype, presumably at the beginning of the century, is *Basileus Digenis Akritas*, a romance based in part on oral tradition of stories about border disputes with the Turks and partly on more literary models.[20] It is written in popular,

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the manifold Muse, the might of learning
-- perished, the whole renown of Athens,
not even a faint token of it may one see.
So I am forgiven, if with no way of seeing,
the celebrated city of the Athenians
I have graphically raised her image."

Thus, the coming of the Byzantine romances, in imitation of Antiquity, -- curiously at the moment when the Modern Greek vernacular emerges -- is a result of this look backwards, which universally occurs, from Byzantium to the West, during this period, and which is also responsible for archaisms in other forms of Byzantine writing, such as the reference to non-Greek enemies -- "barbarians" -- according to the name of the ancient nation whose territory they currently occupied. According to Magdalino, "here we have positive proof that the literary mimesis of antiquity was beginning to become a conscious exercise in anachronism." Paul Magdalino, *The Perception of the Past in Twelfth-century Europe*, pp. 143-8.)

[20]No twelfth-century manuscript survives, and the extant versions vary. Nevertheless, this text is considered to be earlier than the formal twelfth-century romances, with some portions pre-dating its actual written composition in oral tradition dating back to the events described in the tenth century. (See Roderick Beaton, *The Medieval Greek Romance*, pp. 29-41, and Dennison Hull, *Digenis Akritas*, pp. xv-xxviii.)

spoken Greek -- unlike the romances of the Court which adopted an archaic and stilted style -- and the 15-syllable "political" verse which will become the format of choice for later Greek romances.

The story is in two parts: the first tells of Digenis' parents, a Moslem abducting a Greek princess, their marriage, his conversion and unsuccessful attempts to take her to his home. The second tells of Digenis' rites of passage, his adventures on the border against the Turks and in defense of his abducted bride, and finally his settling down and his eventual death. The premise of border conflict bears some resemblance to the *Chanson de Roland*, but in the *Digenis* the epic motifs remain subdued and the first hint at what we might call courtly love occurs: Digenis' declaration that he has suffered all of his trials for the love of his lady. We shall presently come to the sources of the story and its importance for the subsequent romances, but first we shall consider the other romances of the period. We might however mention offhand the echoes of Digenis in Wolfram's introduction to *Parzival*, and the two-blooded origin of this hero.

2. *The four formal Greek romances and the historical chronicle*

Four romances survive in a more formal Greek reminiscent of their ancient models. The first by most estimations is Prodromos' *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*, composed just in time to be available during Alienor's visit (c. 1143-9)[21] and an apparent classic, surviving in four complete manuscripts of the 13-16th centuries. It is the story,

[21]Roderick Beaton, *The Medieval Greek Romance,* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 67.

reminiscent of Achilles Tatios' hellenistic romance, of two lovers captured by pirates during a raid on Rhodes. A fellow captive, Kratandros, relates his adventures, including the accidental murder of his mistress after the surprise of guards. The leader of the pirates wants to seduce Rhodanthe and sacrifice Dosikles; his overlord is engaged in battle with the king of Pissa who triumphs and captures Dosikles. Rhodanthe, whose ship apparently sinks, ends up in Cyprus as a slave girl, incredibly belonging to their friends' parents. Her story prompts Kratandros' father to go to Pissa. Once safe in Cyprus, Dosikles must resist the advances of Rhodanthe's mother before the reunion and return to Rhodes and Abydos. The romance contains some popular motifs, elements of magic later appearing in Arthurian romances, and a dodecasyllabic verse later termed alexandrine from its use in the French Alexander Romance.[22]

The other three romances seem to be based as much on this one as on classical models. Evgenianos' *Drosilla and Charikils*, composed perhaps as an homage to Prodromos after his death (c.1157?), is in the same vein, but borrows some pastoral elements from Longus. The tragic subplot, this time the death of Kleandros' lover Kalligoni, is saved for the end, increasing the dramatic effect: in a moving scene, the lovers will learn from the unhappy example, as well as from the sparrows, to forsake their well-guarded chastity. (Much can and will be said about chastity in the Greco-Byzantine

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[22]According to Bédier, the Albéric de Besançon fragment of the Old French Alexander romance dates from the beginning of the eleventh century; (Joseph Bédier and Paul Hazard, eds., *Littérature française*, (Paris, 1948), p. 23.) Jean Frappier dates the decasyllabic version between 1160 and 1165, and the *Alexandre de Paris*, or dodecasyllabic version, from shortly before 1190. (*Grundriss der Romanischen Literatur des Mittelalters*, (Heidelberg, 1978), vol. 4, p. 151.)

romances and its manifestation in the chivalric romances of the West, but this cannot be done until we understand the origin of the idealized love which the twelfth century terms *amour courtois*.) According to Beaton, this romance combines Prodromos' intellectualization, his emphasis on artifice and rhetoric, with the example of nature.

Manasses' romance, *Aristandros and Kallithea* (1160?), survives only in a fragment of political verse. The author nevertheless shows some creativity, borrowing from folktales and popular tradition a wicked eunuch and exotic beasts, commonplaces of the Western romances. Also interesting is the fact that this poet is also the author of the *Synopsis Chroniki*, a 6733 line verse history of the world from Genesis to his day. It will be recalled that in the West, certain authors, like Wace and Benoît de Sainte-Maure, also excelled in writing both historical and literary compositions.

As for Efstathios Makremvolitis, his *Ysminias and Ysmene*, in prose, is either the last of the romances (1180s) -- as with French romances shifting from poetry to prose -- or the first. Its comical use of names seems to suggest links with the West: Ysmene resembles the heroine of the Roman de Thebes, Artukomis perhaps a town in France named for King Arthur. Moreover, in the descriptions of artwork, a hellenistic topos, Efstathios depicts Eros as king, reminiscent of the Western Dieu d'amor. His major contributions, through emphasis on erotic dreams, are the comic and psychological elements common in later literature.

3. Traditional Disdain and Recent Appreciation for the Romances

Until recently, these romances have been generally neglected by literary historians, or dismissed as less than artistic. Karl Dietrich's 1909 evaluation is typical; he notes a general "Verfall der Religion, der Moral, des Geschmacks, der Kraft" during this period in Byzantine history, and scoffs at its by-products: "Der Verfall kündigt sich auf allen Gebieten, nicht zuletzt auch im geistigen Leben,in der Literatur."[23] He describes the romances as "eine verschlimmte Auflage des alexandrinisches Sophistenromans, ebenso schlupfig, nur noch rocher und barbarischer; er hat nur kulturgeschichtliches Interesse."[24] He goes on to deride this misbegotten product of Byzantine decadence for lack of imagination, one author "stöpfte... die Lücken mit Stellen aus Homer und Euripedes aus."[25] He also notes borrowings from the Anakreonta, Bucolic poets, Musaeos, Epigrammatic Anthology, Heliodorus, Longus and Achilles Tatius, and cites examples of the crudeness of the authors' own fantasies -- eg. cutting a live cow in two (Prodromos). He concludes, "Es waren keine Griechen, sondern Barbaren."[26] As we have already noted, however, the skillful use of tradition was certainly not frowned upon at this period, and rather than plugging the gaps of their limited imaginations, the authors of these twelfth century romances were purposely displaying their knowledge of their classical

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[23]Karl Dietrich, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Literatur*, (Leipzig, 1909), p. 42.

[24]Ibid., p. 43.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Ibid., p. 44.

forerunners.[27] In all fairness, perhaps the borrowing here is somewhat more blatant than in the Western romance, where motifs are often carefully transposed to a mythical, northern universe, but Byzantium, as the final bastion of classical culture, is strongly nationalistic, opting whenever possible for the preservation of hellenistic motifs. And, as we shall see, this preservation of Hellenistic motifs was essential in the creation of the Western literature of the twelfth century and beyond.

[27]The point is clearly appreciated by recent critics like N.G. Wilson and Roderick Beaton.

CHAPTER III.

HABROCOMES AND ANTEIA: THE HELLENISTIC ANTECEDENTS

1. The Origin of Romance in Late Antiquity.

Before we discuss more specifically the rapport between these romances and their Western counterparts, therefore, it might be useful to consider the sources from which they sprang. Before we enter the Western medieval world, a brief sojourn in Late Antiquity is certainly not off the mark, since the fingerprints of Classical Antiquity have been discerned in Old French literature for a long time. Moreover, as we have already stated, the traditions of Byzantium can best be understood as a continuation of the literary culture of Classical Greece, an often-forgotten millennium of Hellenic culture which paralleled the development of Western medieval society. In this context, Byzantine influence upon Western literature, as upon Western art, will be even more clear.

For some, all fictional narrative is indebted to Homer,[28] and what is known as the Hellenistic age is regarded like the decline of Rome or the death of a star, as a period of overexpansion followed by implosion. But for our four romances the more immediate source of the intrigue -- a long, fictional narrative involving love, capture, separation, and reunion, combined with an allegory of death and resurrection -- may be found in the romances of the this fascinating age when Greek culture spread throughout the

[28]Some critics would go further back to the previous millenium and treat certain Semitic tales as romances, but such considerations would be far afield from the particular concentration of motif and plot structure that we are concerned with.

Mediterranean world and beyond, and when the great cities of this sea basked in a wealth of ideas imbued by classical culture and synchretistic beliefs. Our discussion mainly follows Hägg.

The first of the Hellenistic romances, which may be dated to the first century B.C., is Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*.[29] Its outline is similar to the later romances: the two lovers -- in this case allowed to marry as the people of Syracuse persuade an unwilling father -- are separated when jealous rivals accuse Callirhoe of infidelity and Chaereas kicks her in the stomach. The blow is only apparently fatal, and she is buried only to be rescued by grave robbers. In the succession of incidents, Callirhoe, pregnant by Chaereas, is obliged to marry, then becomes the object of a fight between three competing rivals with the backdrop of Persian King Artaxerxes' war on Egypt. Chaereas' deeds of valor precede a recognition of his beloved and the return to tell the story. The ensemble is marked by an optimistic psychology, giving legitimate motivations to heroes and villains alike.

After some lost romances extant only in brief fragments and wall frescoes, the *Ephesiaka* of Xenophon of Ephesus, from the 2nd century A.D. continues the tradition into the "golden age" of the Greek romance, his adventures of Habrocomes and Anteia, their love, imprisonment, temptation -- even a brothel scene -- and reunion at the Isis shrine at Rhodes augmented by the poignant story of the old fisherman Aegialeus, and

[29]It is significant that recent scholarship dates the first Hellenistic romances to well before the birth of Christ; this dating makes it clear that any influence between this genre and the Apocrypha and hagiographical works of the Christian era originates with the Hellenistic romance.

his experiences with his wife until her death. The simple, folk-tale-like narration of the old fisherman is a high-point in the otherwise uneven and sometimes superficial travel/adventure narrative, which is at times clumsy. An unforgettable image is that of the fisherman's wife, mummified to keep him company until his death.

The three romances of late antiquity (3rd c?) draw from these but are more self-consciously artistic productions, mirroring the later development of the Byzantine romances. Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe* substitutes a rustic, pastoral milieu for the travel motif; two children abandoned and brought up by a sheep and a goat experience a mutual sexual awakening under the influence of Nature and the awakening inspired by the change of seasons. After attraction and separation, they are recognized by affluent parents who can care for them, but they decide to stay by themselves in their rural environment.

Although Longus' narrative resembles a prose version of bucolic poetry, his description of nature is more like a well-kept garden, and he adds to this artificial quality by suggesting that his inspiration for the story was a series of paintings,[30] No less self-conscious is Achilles Tatius, whose *Leucippe and Clitophon* is filled with "ekphraseis", long digressions, sometimes allegorical, on various subjects, including art. His narration is rather realistic: minor characters experience development, and Clitophon's first-person narration does not give any more information than he might have had at any particular moment in his story. He seems to enjoy extended narration, whether of symbolic paintings or the blossoming of love from a first glance at dinner, to a private meeting,

[30]This motif, although also found in other works such as Prudentius' *Peristephanon,* is especially characteristic of the *ekphraseis* or descriptive passages of the Hellenistic romance.

first kiss, etc. Moreover, the otherwise conventional narrative of capture by pirate and travel (Nile, Ephesus, etc.) is spiced up by an apparent irony and humorous incidents such as the pirates debating their sexual preferences and settling on boys over women.

Finally, Heliodorus' *Ethiopica* is the monument at the end of the ancient line. Starting with a photographic depiction of carnage at an outdoor banquet surprised by enemies, the narrative, from the perspective of brigands, focuses in on Chariclea holding the wounded Theagenes. Thus, to create suspense, the story begins *in medias res* and the subsequent narrative explains the birth of Chariclea to an Ethiopian couple--white because her mother was looking at a painting of Andromeda at the time of conception, her acquaintance at the Pythian Games with Theagenes, their love, adventures, marriage and conversion as priest and priestess to the Ethiopian sun god.

2. *Common Plot Formula and "Personal Salvation"*

Thus, despite their divergences, the Ancient and Medieval romances of Greece follow the formula of love, adventure and separation, and reunion and marriage. Just like their Medieval counterparts, the Hellenistic romances have been condemned by literary historians as the decadent portion of Ancient composition, due to their predictability and flatness--in comparison to modern "psychological" novels. Taylor, moreover, using 19th-century literary standards, dismisses them as lacking an "ordered causal chain of

events",[31] and follows the generally held view that they are the products of a period of literary decadence incapable of matching the "masterpieces" of the classical period:

> "In general this literary decadence was... from relevancy of treatment of subjects having real interest to irrelevancy of treatment of subjects having no real interest; from setting forth veritable features of human life to devising preposterous fictions; from large delineation of human character to the absence of any veritable and distinctive characterization of persons... from setting forth the course of life according to its... laws to setting it forth in ways of happening and accidents. Among these are works which... served as the originals from which by translation and adaptation were constructed some of the most popular medieval compositions."[32]

So much for the "modern" view. Using the criteria of the time, however, we can see that the romances satisfied a definite need in their audience, and were quite appreciated, whether by the masses who heard them read out loud or by the scholarly readers of the later compositions. It would be unfair to judge these works by our critical standards, where character development is of the essence and the interest is in how protagonists overcome their weaknesses. Moreover these works, like all romances, are not so interesting for some unexpected outcome, but rather for the manner in which the poet would arrive at the outcome, in the entertaining convolutions of the plot which, to be appreciated, certainly require an aesthetic different from the classical ideal of single-minded motivation and causality. In this sense, they are much more akin to today's

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[31]Henry Osborn Taylor, *The Classical Heritage of the Middle Ages*, (New York, 1901, repr. 1951), p. 38.

[32]Ibid., pp. 33-4.

popular literature than to the "serious" novel; spy novels, mysteries, and other popular genres lead the reader through a series of adventures where the basic outcome -- good triumphs over evil -- is generally expected, but, in true romanesque fashion, it is the meandering through plot convolutions that brings the anticipated pleasure.

Some theorists moreover, like Hägg and Beaton, speculate as to the necessity of the romance for the Hellenistic culture where the decline of the pagan gods left a vacuum filled by the "personal salvation" of love in the face of adversity and Chance. According to this model, the typical inhabitant of the Hellenistic city, no longer having a clearly delineated purpose as a citizen of a democratic polis, resolves the question of his role on our planet through the fulfillment that love offers to the characters once they overcome their trials. As we shall see, this fulfillment is represented as the result of an initiation process which predates the Hellenistic romance and survives it throughout the ages in a variety of texts often sublimating the same motifs in various guises.

CHAPTER IV.

DIONYSOS AND DEMETER: THE MYSTERY CULTS

1. Orphism, the Mystery Cults, and the Origins of the Concept of Immortality

But there is another form of "personal salvation" implied by the romances, and it is perhaps at the roots of their origin. This personal salvation, namely that of the soul after death, will become central in their transmission to the romances of the West. In this context, the religious background reflected in the romances is extremely important. The Hellenistic romances were written at a period when numerous "mystery cults", including that of Dionysos, Demeter, Adonis, Attis, Isis and Osiris, etc., were preaching personal salvation and survival of the soul after death.[33] Such views, symbolically if not explicitly present in the romances, will, as we shall see, find their way into the Christianized romances of the Dark Ages, and, in turn, into the Romances of the 12th century. Indeed, as we shall see, they may be the only basis for the survival of the genre.

Central to these cults is the concept of the immortality of the soul. We shall follow the discussion of DePater, which is corroborated by the classic work of Eduard Zeller. The idea of immortality, as DePater shows, was not clearly established in Homeric times (800 B.C.). In fact, Homer refers to the psyche, or animate part of a person, after death as "the shade in Hades, a soulless... ethereal or astral body which

[33]These mystery cults, and particularly Orphism, pre-date the philosophical version of immortality, eg. Plato's theory of forms. In the "decadent" Hellenistic period, it is the mystery cults, rather than philosophy, which promulgate the concept.

leaves the dying body through its mouth or through open wounds."[34] As DePater notes, this implies the continuation after death of a sort of body without a conscience; the opposite of the soul. Already in Homer, however, some passages seem to contradict this concept. In the *Odyssey*, for example, reference is made to the elect residing happily in the Elysian Fields, perhaps a mingling of Mycenaean belief, as Menelaus is curiously there but not Achilles or Tiresias. In Hades, moreover, the neutrality of this land of shades is broken by reference to Sisyphus and Tantalus, both punished there for their transgressions. Moreover, a Homeric hymn refers to beings in Hades close to Gods -- a positive connotation -- as opposed to others in a swamp. Moreover a reference is made to "ordination". All this implies very fluid religious conceptions, and a mélange of various contradictory beliefs.

The idea of personal salvation, however, arises from this confusion in the following centuries through Orphism and the Mystery Religions. According to DePater, "Already, during the time of Homer, some people seem to have had a much higher conception of the psyche... as something divine both in origin and destination... for instance in the Dionysian cult... When the need for personal redemption became felt, this notion of the psyche [w]ould become the dominating one."[35]

The rise of the Orphic religion, at the latest by the sixth century B.C., marks the beginning of a definite belief in an immortal soul. According to DePater, "It has been a fashion to locate the origin of mystery-religions... in the Persian or even Indian culture...

[34]W.A. DePater, *Immortality: Its History in the West,* (Leuven, 1985), pp. 2-3.

[35]Ibid, p. 5.

As to the Greek mystery religions, the origin seems to be in Thracia... and perhaps also Ionia... reincarnation... takes its starting point from the Greek conception of the psyche as both breath and life-force, which leaves the body at death... The rather natural question seemed to be whence that life force came and where it will go... And from there it would be only one step to suppose that the... psyche ...can go into a new body..."[36] He notes the presence of mystic-cathartic religion among peasants since the 8th century, involving ritual purification: dances, and deification through freedom from earthly existence.[37] He notes that, in the Dionysian cult, "the ecstatic drunken fit was seen as an anticipation of the liberation of the soul".[38] Moreover, he dismisses the theory of Herodotus that reincarnation came from Egypt, since the only mention of an Egyptian afterlife is for brief returns in one's own form; moreover, as the Egyptian idea evolved, immortality was at first reserved for the Pharaohs and then for mummified persons.[39] Moreover, DePater dismisses an Indian origin, as reincarnation is not mentioned in the Rigveda, the great

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[36]W.A. DePater, *Immortality*, pp.9-10. Although some critics feel that more weight should be placed on the impact of Eastern influences on Western tradition, (eg. Buddhist "Jatkas" in the "Eustache" legend -- a connection proposed by Delehaye), it is our belief that the idea of reincarnation as propounded by Pythagoras, as DePater implies, was arrived at independently, or that, at the very least, the trail of influence is lost. In any case, we shall be much more concerned in our discussion with resurrection and eternal life than with reincarnation.

[37]Ibid., p. 10.

[38]Ibid., P. 15. Curiously, he sees a parallel with Christ's "You shall eat and drink at my table in my kingdom." (Luke 22:30)

[39]Ibid., pp. 10-11. Interestingly, this practice is reflected in Xenophon's romance, where a fisherman attempts to preserve his spouse's memory through mummification, and in the doctrine of the Greek Orthodox church, where burial is a prerequisite for the physical resurrection of the Second Coming.

classic of Hindu religion, and contacts are apparently limited before Alexander the Great.[40]

Against this background, the Orphic religion develops from the creation myth called Orphic revelation: Zagreus, son of Dionysus, is cut up and eaten by the Titans, children of Heaven (Ouranos) and Earth (Gaia). Zeus kills the Titans in turn with his thunderbolt, creating men from their ashes. Thus, man is both good -- a soul created from the divine -- and evil -- a corrupt body created from the Titans. "The consciousness of the opposition between body and soul, and the deep conviction that the soul is of divine and therefore immortal nature, made the Orphics see the body as a prison and tomb of the soul." The Orphic adherents, therefore, practiced a non-violent asceticism, and ate no meat so as to mortify any inclination towards material existence.[41]

Orphic ideas survive mainly through philosophers of later centuries, such as Pythagoras, Empedocles, Heraclitus and Plato, who were influenced by them. Pythagoras of Samos, for example, set up a sect in southern Italy, until persecution drove him back to Greece in 520 B.C.. Pythagoreans avoided eating meat, believing, as Orphics, in judgment and retribution in the afterlife, but also that the sinful soul had to return to a new body three times until pure: eating meat could mean eating a friend. "Through him, but at the inspiration of Orphism, the immortality of the soul (psyche) became a philosophical thesis, and also that the body is a tomb, and that the soul migrates

[40]W.A. DePater, *Immortality*, p. 11.

[41]Ibid., p. 15. This doctrine is reminiscent of the later beliefs of the Gnostics, the Bogomils, and the Albigensians, which will have some relevance for our thesis.

(metempsychose) in order to be cleansed from sin. They worshipped one God, who cares about the world. From him come both the unbodily soul and the highest wisdom. That is why the soul desires to escape its prison and to arrive at the sphere of absolute harmony." Pythagoreans practiced monk-like asceticism (male and female communities), study of science, music for purification, vegetarianism, temperance, and good behaviour towards others.[42]

Contemporaneous with Orphism and often overlapping with it and with Pythagoreanism -- which died and was revived by Philolaus in Thebes, subsequently becoming popular in the 300s and again in the century before Christ -- were the Mystery religions. Whereas Orphism was mostly written, these were popular practices, originating among the peasant population, tied to fertility and involving secret ceremonies, in all likelihood fertility rites. According to DePater, "the kernel is mostly a fertility cult, the gods being personifications of the life of nature. It turns mostly around a couple, for instance a mother-god and a hero, a half-god, as her son, husband or lover. This hero has been taken away by death, but like the flora and fauna every year, after having died, come alive in Spring again, so the hero too. There were preparatory rites like washing and fasting with the aim of being cleansed from sin and then a kind of ordination mostly consisting in the showing of the cult-objects and symbols, accompanied by the reading of some texts. The main celebration was the enacting of the cultic myth: the death and resurrection of the secondary god (a far analogy to our Mass). The participants were thought to... get some connection with him, such that they could hope for protection in

[42]W.A. DePater, *Immortality,* pp. 15-17.

this life and above all happiness in the life hereafter... There was a mutual acknowledgement of the different cults and in... time a kind of common language was developed."[43]

Such faiths included the Demeter and Persephone cult at Eleusis, the Dionysian cult in Greece proper, that of Adonis, Attis and Cybele, Isis and Osiris, and Mithras in surrounding areas. The cult at Eleusis, twenty-two miles from Athens, celebrated each year the return of Persephone from her four months in Hades, where she was forced to stay for eating of its pomegranate.[44] On her return, Demeter, her mother and goddess of the harvest, brought forth the fruits of the earth, cause for much celebration. In the Isis myth, similarly, the goddess rescues her husband Osiris and brings him back from the dead. As Frazer speculatively suggests in the *Golden Bough,* such cults exhibit the logical continuation of primitive fertility rites based on the seasons, the death of a god or the sacrifice of a king representing the coming of winter, and the rebirth of the god, or the crowning of a new king, representing the coming of spring.

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[43]W.A. DePater, *Immortality,* pp. 13-14.

[44]It may be possible to draw a parallel here with the story of Eve's apple; the consumption of fruit leading to fall from grace: from Paradise to Earth or from Earth to Hades. This confirms the thesis that primitive societies have similar myths; fortunately for literature, the Greek version of the Fall and Redemption would be transferred from the mythological sphere to the sphere of romance, from whence it would radiate to the rest of Europe.

2. Survival of "Personal Salvation" in Christianity

Crucial for our study is the survival of mystery cult practices and beliefs in Christianity; the latest research seems to suggest that the transition between the two was not, as commonly believed, the dying out of the one and the concurrent birth of the other, but rather a more Hegelio-marxist synthesis of opposites. A 1991 study on the mystery cult of Artemis at Ephesus -- a site important not only for the mystery cults but for our Hellenistic romances as well as early Christianity -- by Guy M. Rogers concludes that "the gods at Ephesus were not dying, indeed had not begun to die in the imaginations of the Ephesians at the beginning of the second century... An atmosphere of heightened pagan piety in the city from the middle to late first century... may have turned some Ephesians into the defenders of the pagan past, and others into the prophets of the Christian future."[45] Rogers' study of manuscripts found recently at Ephesus reveals a description of the processions for the goddess, for which figurines, mostly of the goddess but also of stags and other persons, were made of silver and donated by prominent citizens. According to Rogers: "The first civic ritual involved individuals and civic bodies in a scheme of lotteries and distributions of cash doled out inside the temple of Artemis each year during the mysteries. The second ritual included the ephebes in a procession of thirty-one gold and silver type statues and images of Artemis at least once every two weeks during the year."[46] The first part of this celebration survives in St.

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[45]Guy M. Rogers, *The Sacred Identity of Ephesus*, (London, 1991), pp. 147-8.

[46]Ibid., p. 136.

Basil's day -- the Greek Orthodox New Year's day custom -- where a coin is inserted into a cake and the cake cut up so that the recipient might have the coin as a matter of chance. This is moreover the traditional day for gift-giving, often in the form of cash, in the Greek Orthodox culture.[47] As to the procession, a recent book on the origins of Christianity notes that "In the works of Cyril of Jerusalem, 315-386, there is a series of catechetical lectures called mystagogical, which describe the rituals of the fourth-century Eastern church in detail. Exactly as was the case with the Eleusinian ritual, the ceremonies are named mysteries and the initiates mystagogues. After the applicants were duly listed in a sacred book, they were given the 'torches of the bridal train,' which, like the Eleusinians, they carried in a grand processional to the chapel, where, step by step, they learned the secrets of the cult. Now wedded to Christ, as Orphic initiates were to Dionysus, they proceeded to their more esoteric study and initiation."[48]

Indeed the word "mystery" persists in the Eastern church, and represents the sacraments of the church, including Communion, a frequent practice for Christians. According to Larsan, during "the esoteric pagan mysteries... a god-like man was ceremonially slain and symbolically eaten as a mystical sacrifice; as the... church developed, its service came more and more to consist of the Blessed Sacrament, called the liturgy... which was substantially a re-creation of the mysteries of Osiris, Demeter

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[47]It is perhaps significant that similar practices in other Christian nations are completely absorbed into the Christmas celebration, indicating a further evolution and distancing from their origins.

[48]Martin A. Larsan, *The Story of Christian Origins,* (Washington, 1977), 657-8.

and Dionysus...".[49] Mystery cult beliefs seem to herald the Raising of Lazarus by Jesus and certainly appear to foretell His resurrection. Indeed Christian practice recalls paganism in some ways, perhaps because the early church made an overt attempt to appeal to pagans, as is attested by the gospels and epistles to the gentiles and the controversy over the spiritual laws governing them, the concordance of Christian and pagan holidays at Christmas and Easter, and particularly the statuary of the Western Church, which resembles pagan idols.

For our research, the interest in such matters lies in the survival of literary motifs from pagan antiquity in the Christian Middle Ages; we do not presume to make theological arguments, and it is not the point of this work to suggest that the Christian religion may be lumped in -- as is done by atheistic historians -- with these mystery cults, which faded from memory for good reason. It might be suggested, however, that a significant reason for the spread of Christianity is the sharing of this common pagan background by the majority in the Roman Empire. Christianity seems to fulfill the promises of the Mystery Religions, which, we might say, herald it perhaps even more specifically than does the Old Testament.[50] Moreover, as DePater explains, the

[49]Martin A. Larsan, *The Story of Chiristian Origins*, p. 657. Larsan makes a distinction between the Greek word "mystery" and the Latin "sacrament", believing the former to reflect a closer bond to the mystery religions that Christianity replaced.

[50]Although the Gospel of Matthew makes every effort to conform the life of Jesus to the prophesies of Isaiah and other Old Testament prophets, there is, even in the Biblical accounts, great confusion as to who He is and what His purpose might be. This is because the Old Testament, in general, is not concerned with eternal life, but rather with the continuation of the people of Israel. No mention is made in the canonical Old Testament of eternal life -- with the exception of Moses and Isaiah, who do not share the same fate as the rest of their people, but are called directly to Heaven by God. There is

philosophical systematization of belief in an immortal soul in the philosophy of Plato and later in the Neo-Platonist school will become a central focus of medieval Christian apologetics: the Biblical source for immortality will arise slowly in the Old Testament out of the belief that God is all-powerful, perhaps even over death. Christ's promise in that context seems to be of a physical resurrection -- except in problematic passages as when, on the cross, he promises the thief Paradise on that very day. Conforming these two conflicting beliefs, -- that we have a soul which will not die with our physical death and that we die but will be resurrected at the second coming -- mostly for the benefit of the Pagan community which, already familiar with the idea of salvation, needs to

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a gradual development of a notion that as all-powerful, God can restore life since He is the one who originally shortened it, as a punishment to those first created. When the concept of an immortal soul enters the Old Testament, mainly in the already Hellenistic Old Testament Apocrypha, it is Hellenistic Neo-Platonic concepts that are being expressed.

The apocryphal book of Wisdom, for example, written in the middle of the first century B.C. and being the last of the Old Testament Apocrypha, is composed under the influence of "the cultural life of Alexandria, its imposing philosophical system, its advances in the physical sciences, its fascinating mystery religions, astronomy, Hermetic doctrines, its seductive popular cults." Thus, according to the commentary of *The New Jerusalem Bible*, "The author makes use of the platonic distinction of body and soul ['for a perishable body presses down the soul' 9:15], and of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, to proclaim that God has made the human race for immortality and that incorruption is the reward of Wisdom and the way to God. This life is only a preparation for another in which the upright live with God and the wicked are punished. The author makes no allusion to a bodily resurrection. He does, however, seem to admit the possibility of a resurrection of bodies in spiritualized form, in an attempt hereby to reconcile the Greek notion of immortality with the biblical doctrines which were tending towards a bodily resurrection. ([As in] Daniel)." (Henry Wansborough, ed., *The New Jerusalem Bible*, (New York, 1985), p. 1043.)

So, when Jesus makes his appearance as the Son of God, many Jews do not understand the spiritual redemption that He offers, because they expect a Messiah who will rescue the people of Israel from their Roman oppressors. Not so with the adherents to the Hellenistic mystery cults; for them, the idea of linking one's own death and resurrection to that of a god is a very familiar concept.

understand Christianity in its own terms, is at the source of much of early theology.

On the matter of Pagan sources for Christianity, Eliade makes some thoughtful comments moderating earlier doctrinaire views. Christianity could have sprung up independently of the Mystery Cults, but later assimilated their manners. According to Eliade,

> "... the several Christian communions preserve, in varying degrees, vestiges of a mystery that is initiatory in nature, Baptism, [Communion],... Ordination...[etc.]. But it must not be forgotten that Christianity triumphed in the world and became a universal religion only because it detached itself from the climate of the Greco-oriental mysteries [where salvation was limited to the select individuals secretly initiated] and proclaimed itself a religion of salvation accessible to all."[51]

We might add that, if we are to believe that the God of the Old and New Testaments is one and the same, then He must purposely manifest himself on the level of the society of the time: to the Jews he is generally a God of atonement and sacrifice, describing himself as a jealous and vengeful god, but to the Hellenistic world a God of personal salvation and love. Eliade makes the argument, in our opinion only partly convincing, that with Christ's historical apparition, the circular time of primitive societies, represented in the annual ritual resurrection of a god, is nullified by the death and resurrection of Christ, a one-time act which secured salvation for all believers, not only initiates.

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[51]Mircea Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, (New York, 1958), p. ix. Samuel Angus concurs, hypothesizing that Jesus' education among the Essenes could account for his pronouncements, although he argues for a doctoring of the gospels, for example suppressing some of the non-violent teachings for glorification of war. (In Samuel Angus, *Mystery Religions and Christianity*, (New Hyde Park, 1966).) Eliade is more precise in context, having studied all major religions for his encyclopedia and dealt with patterns in his other works:*The Myth of the Eternal Return, Patterns in Comparative Religion,* etc.

Although this observation is theologically correct, we cannot help agree with Frazer: there is a survival of cyclical time in the commemoration of Christ's death and resurrection each year in the symbolic circles of the Christian religious calendar which overlaps in its annual celebration of Christmas and Easter with annual season-related celebration of pagan mysteries, worship of the sun god, etc. Moreover, certain heretical branches of early Christianity, particularly the Gnostics and the shadowy authors of the Apocrypha, believed that a secret teaching of Christ indeed existed, implying an initiation into higher knowledge or "gnosis" limited to the few. Nevertheless, Eliade points out that

> "The presence of... initiatory themes in primitive Christianity does not necessarily imply the influence of the mystery religions. Such a theme could have been taken from one of the esoteric Jewish sects, especially the Essenes [the pacifistic sect now supposed to have brought up Christ]... it is not even necessary to suppose that an initiatory theme was 'borrowed' by Christianity from some other religion... initiation is coexistent with any new revelation of spiritual life. For the earliest Christian communities, the resurrection of Jesus could not be identified with the periodic death and resurrection of the God of the mysteries. Like Christ's life, suffering and death, his resurrection had occurred in history, in the days of Pontius Pilate."[52]

According to this theory, the trappings of the old religions were later adopted by Christianity in order to appeal to the Hellenistic world: archaic symbols took on Christian meaning, images and initiatory themes were borrowed from the mysteries, and Greek philosophy was assimilated into doctrine. Thus, the "cosmic tree," an ancient symbol "set at the center of the world and ensuring communication between heaven and earth", is

[52]Mircea Eliade, *Rites and Symbols,* pp. 115-117.

associated with the cross, and the baptismal font is reminiscent of both a tomb and a womb, death and rebirth, thus "reconsecrate[s] an archaic initiatory theme." By the fourth century, in fact, church services resembled secret "mysteries", the altar separated from the congregation by the iconostasis.[53]

Indeed, some Patristic writings refer to the church liturgy as a holdover from the ancient mysteries. From Clement of Alexandria, writing in the late first century to Pseudo-Dionysus writing perhaps in the fifth, there is clear reference to the sacred rites of the church as a secret initiation reminiscent of the pagan predecessors. Thus, Clement of Alexandria, writing to Pagans, borrows the language and imagery of their religion: "O truly sacred mysteries! O pure light! In the blaze of the torches I have a vision of heaven and of God. I become holy by initiation." Likewise, Pseudo-Dionysius states: "Take care that you do not reveal the holy of holies, preserve the mysteries of the hidden God so that the profane may not partake of them, and in your sacred illuminations speak of the sacred only to saints." Thus, although there is disagreement as to the origins of Christianity, this in no way affects our thesis; for there is no mystery as to the origin of its trappings.

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[53]Mircea Eliade, *Rites and Symbols*, pp. 119-120. According to one theory, propounded by William Phipps, this process began much earlier than the fourth century and is even noticeable in the New Testament itself where, according to Phipps, the oldest portion, consisting of Paul's epistles, is relatively free of supernatural incidents, whereas the Gospels demonstrate the onset of an "inflation" of incidents reflecting contemporary superstition. If this controversial theory were correct, however, then Christian doctrine would have to be reduced to the moral teachings of Jesus, his miracles and Resurrection -- indeed, the entire metaphysical basis of the Christian religion -- dismissed as a reflection of the Pagan beliefs of His time. (See William Phipps, *Paul Against Supernaturalism*, (New York, 1987), pp. 9-22.)

3. Survival of the Literary Motif of Death and Resurrection, from the Hellenistic Romance, in early Christian Writings; Parallel Conditions for Composition of Byzantine Romances

In order to understand the influence of the Hellenistic romance on subsequent fiction, it is important to suggest that, as a literary motif, death and resurrection, is reflected in the hellenistic romances. Here, however, the supernatural, mystery cult variety of death and resurrection, is transformed to the temporal sphere, to serve as a catalyst for the strengthening of love through initiatory trials. Here it is often symbolic, as in the false death, burial and 'resurrection' of Anteia. According to Hagg, one critic, Merkelbach, suggests that the romances, especially because of such burials and subsequent "resurrections" which often figure in them, were in fact *romans à clé* written in a way that only initiates in mystery cults could decipher their allegorical meaning. Although this thesis is not accepted wholesale by most critics, the mystery cult divinities and symbolism are definitely present and exert their influences in the Ancient romances, where the Sun God, Isis, or some other divinity, as well as Fate, apparently supervise the action. Moreover, the general plot of suffering, even symbolic death, before eventual bliss becomes the archetypal rite of passage, which will be mirrored in Christ's suffering and Resurrection, the journey of the Christian soul through death to the Afterlife, and, as we shall see, in the Lives of desert Saints and even in Arthurian Romance, although its authors may be oblivious to their sources. Thus, the central initiatory motif of the hellenistic romances, both explicit in the quest for temporal love and implicit in the

symbolic death and resurrection reminiscent of mystery cults, is carried over by Christianity into the literature of the Middle Ages, and will be significant to our understanding of the source material for the Medieval Romances.

For the moment, however, suffice it to say that some elements of the ancient romances, especially the burials and subsequent "resurrections", reflect this mystery cult background. It will be significant that these religious motifs, as well as the motif of suffering and rescue from near death, carry over into the hagiographic literature of the next age. As to the hypothesis that the romances were written during an age of uncertainty which made personal salvation desirable -- if not through mystery cults at least through the fulfillment of human love -- it will be significant for the future development of the romance as well. Beaton will extend it to twelfth-century Byzantium, suggesting that the shrinking of the Byzantine State, particularly after the defeat by the Turks at Manzikert,[54] lead to a questioning of the inviolability of the Christian State and the need once again for a personal salvation in the form of human love -- thus, the regeneration of the romance. Indeed, the treatment of love in these 'decadent' periods of Greek literature will prove fruitful in understanding the origins of courtly love. First, however, we must consider the gap of nearly a millennium between the Ancient and Medieval romance.

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[54]By the twelfth century, as today, Byzantium had shrunk, after earlier periods of great expansion, to roughly the area populated by the Greek-speaking peoples. According to Norwich, the defeat "was an unmitigated catastrophe, the full significance of which was revealed with the gradual realization that the Empire had effectively lost, in the space of a few nightmare hours, three-quarters of Asia Minor." (John Julius Norwich, *Byzantium: the Apogee*, (New York, 1992), p. xxiv.)

CHAPTER V.

PAUL AND THECLA: THE CHRISTIANIZED ROMANCE

1. The Conversion from Paganism to Christianity; the Change in Literary Taste.

What did happen in the meantime? Surely narration did not die out. Surely Byzantium, still politically intact after the collapse of Rome and the plunge of the Western Empire into the "Dark Ages", maintained some sort of narrative tradition through the following centuries. Indeed it did, but subject matter changed with the tastes of the population. Whereas the first romances earnestly described a Pagan world worshiping the Greek gods, Isis and her reborn husband Osiris, or the Sun, later romances paid homage to these elements as topoi of the now-established literary genre. Meanwhile, the masses turned their attention elsewhere.

If we accept the premise that the romance allegorically symbolizes man's search for salvation -- as will be apparent in the French romances of the Grail legend, particularly in the thirteenth century versions --, then the Greeks of the third century a.d. naturally saw the end of this search not in the fulfillment of carnal love of the hellenistic romance, but in the negation of earthly desires in order to obtain spiritual salvation, as promised by Christianity. As the Eastern Roman Emperor Constantine converted to the new religion after the military victory promised by a dream of a cross in the sky and moved his capital to Constantinople, the Greek-speaking population of his empire was being inundated by stories relating the acts of Christ, his Apostles, and various Martyrs and

Saints.

Harris, in his study of literacy in the Ancient World concludes that, in the early Christian as in the hellenistic world, with Ancient literacy ranging from 5-15%, with a possible high among male citizens in Hellenistic cities of 30%, the bulk of the audience for a work had to be read to.[55] "The written culture of antiquity was in the main restricted to a privileged minority--though in some places it was a large minority--and it coexisted with elements of an oral culture."[56] He attributes this phenomenon to a lack of techniques for mass production of books, low emphasis on reading as a requirement for citizenship, and the use of slaves, which precluded a literate work force.[57] Nevertheless, the Christian religion was based primarily on a body of written works, and a substantial audience existed, so that Constantine had to order 50 "somatia" of Scripture for his new Capital.[58] (Hägg notes that, in the Ancient romances, words ran together so as to be fairly unintelligible unless read out loud.) Thus, the audience for the Saints' Lives, as well as the romances, had to be read to, and such was even more the case in the West, where literacy fell well below Ancient levels during the Dark Ages.

With the end of Hellenistic civilization, and particularly with declining literacy, the literary taste of the period is particularly dictated by the masses, illiterate audience, for whom hagiographies are composed for edification and entertainment. These tales will

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[55]William Harris, *Ancient Literacy.* (Cambridge, Mass, 1986), p. 328.

[56]Ibid., p. 337.

[57]Ibid., p. 327.

[58]Ibid., p. 324.

generally be short and repetitious, borrowing many common topoi from the preceding period, from folktales, and from each other, but fortunately preserving such motifs for the renaissance of sophisticated composition nearly a thousand years later.

2. The early Church and the development of the Christian canon.

To understand the diversion of the romance narrative into Saints' Lives in the Middle Ages, we must first trace a path through the *New Testament Apocrypha,* which we might term a religious sub-genre of the romance. Apocrypha, meaning "of hidden origin", are works in forms resembling New Testament genres but for one reason or another not accepted into the Biblical canon.[59] Beaton notes that "the Saints' lives of the Middle Ages were in many respects the natural successor to the novel"[60] and Wilmotte quotes M. Jourdan: "La littérature évangélique aboutit à créer une nouvelle variété du roman grec."[61] As we shall see, religious romance narrative began as these apocryphal augmentations of the canonical books of the *Bible*, and progressed to ascetic Saints' Lives. In both cases, some of the works are idealized accounts of authentic origins, others thinly veiled romances in Christianized form.

Before we deal with the "romances" of this period, a general understanding of early Christian writings is necessary. Contrary to the belief of many fundamentalist

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[59]Wilhelm Schneemelcher, ed. *New Testament Apocrypha*, (Louisville, 1991), Vol. 1, p. 14.

[60]Roderick Beaton, ed., *The Greek Novel A.D. 1-1985,* (London, 1988), p. vii.

[61]M. Wilmotte, *De l'Origine du roman en France*, (Paris, 1923), 14.

Christians, the primitive Christian church did not venerate a written body of works known as the *New Testament*. Authority was placed mainly in the oral traditions of the sayings of Jesus, and in such of the Jewish scriptures as fitted His pronouncements. Later, oral traditions and recollections were written down in various texts, including the Gospels of our canon and other divergent works. Some of these works resemble our *New Testament* very closely, some purport to pass on secret teachings until then disclosed only to a few, and still others suggest minor changes which could fundamentally alter meanings. The most recent study of such a text, the Codex Bezae of circa 400, a bilingual manuscript of the Gospels and Acts, leads to the conclusion that its sources, probably oral until circa 200 A.D. were in a state of flux, which would explain its relative freedom in treating certain passages. Interestingly, for example, in Luke 6:4, Jesus says "If you know what you are doing, then you are blessed; if not, then accursed and a transgressor of the Law."[62] Such statements would certainly contradict the analogy of believers as innocent sheep and the church as the pastor, and support Gnostic over Orthodox interpretation. The study, by D.C. Parker, concludes that "the texts were in a constant process of being reshaped within the context of the church."[63] The further conclusion, of course, is that the canonical texts as we read them today are not necessarily the oldest or most reliable, but those which most closely fitted the doctrine as elaborated by the Church. Thus, the fundamentalist position that the canon as it has been passed on through the church is in

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[62]D.C. Parker, *Codex Bezae*, (Cambridge, 1992), p. 286.

[63]Ibid., p. 280.

itself the Word of God, independent of "tradition" or interpretation, is untenable indeed,[64] not only on the basis of the controversy over the exact meaning of Divine Inspiration, but also because scripture and church doctrine go hand in hand as two parts of an indivisible whole. Indeed, it is not until the "Patristic" period -- beginning with Clement of Alexandria but continuing for several centuries -- that consideration of consolidating a "canon" of Scripture, collecting works read at various churches, and determining the validity of their doctrine is even considered. There is thus a pre-canonical period in the first century when oral tradition is fixed in writing and the testaments of the apostles are written down -- the Gospels are evidently not meant to be parts of a single testament since Luke and Matthew seem to expand on Mark or a prototype "Q" document of the sayings of Jesus -- in short, there is "an interpretative summary of the Jesus tradition", and then, beginning in the second century, a consolidation of this tradition in the gospels, the "apostolos" or epistles of witnesses.[65] This consolidation is in part the result of the growth of heretical sects, marking the beginning of the orthodox church's need to protect its mainstream doctrine from them.[66]

[64]Even today, fundamentalists quibble over whether the Bible is the literal "Word of God", and attempt to account for inconsistencies in the Bible as scribal errors or insignificant human errors in an otherwise divine and doctrinally correct text.

[65]We rely on this most recent authority as to the primacy of Mark over Matthew, but note that the opposite is also believed to be true -- that Mark is actually a summary of Matthew. The solution to this argument does not really concern us here.

[66]Indeed, although the councils of the Church represented the formal attempt to fix the orthodox doctrine as a standard of belief against which actual practices might be measured, and to arrive at a compromise between separate, apparently heterodox beliefs and practices, according to Campenhausen, protecting "orthodox" beliefs against heresy was a concern of patristic theologians even during the second century: "Patristics originated in the urge to assemble witnesses to the 'authentic' orthodox tradition, that it

For this discussion, we follow the new 1991 Schneemelcher revision of Hennecke's *New Testament Apocrypha.* According to Schneemelcher, by the 2nd century "the manifold variety of Christian doctrine and expressions of the faith begins to become unified [in]... the struggle against Gnosticism and the syncretistic dissolution of the Christian message...".[67]

Thus, "canon" meaning both rules and ordinances but also a list or catalogue comes to mean first the proclamation of truth by the church, then a summary of Orthodox Christian doctrine, and finally a "collection of the recognized writings of the Old and New Testaments". The line of demarcation between the period of oral tradition and the beginning of the outline of a canon is c. A.D. 150; before this time, the authority of the words of Christ usually was not transferred to the works in which they appeared; then, according to Schneemelcher, "Primitive Christianity took over 'the scriptures' evidently without reflecting on their number... Only in the 2nd century did people concern themselves with the question of what writings belonged to the canon..."[68] This is the

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might add its weight of authority to valid or disputed doctrines." According to Campenhausen, this is the main preoccupation of the very first fathers of the church: Justin Martyr has a public disputation with a cynic philosopher, and Irenaeus, the prototype of the "pastor", devotes most of his life's work to this end: "Fighting against false doctrines was part of the preacher's task and an urgent problem to which Irenaeus strove to devote himself throughout his life [and] writings." Indeed, his great five-volume work, Refutation of Gnosis, So-Called, is a treatise against the heretical doctrines of the Church's major rivals at the time, the gnostics, who rejected the Old Testament -- particularly Creation by God -- and also the New Testament plan of salvation as man's ultimate goal. (Hans von Campenhausen, *The Fathers of the Greek Church*, (Pantheon, 1959), pp. 9, 23-24.)

[67]Wilhelm Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, Vol. 1, p. 10.

[68]Ibid., p. 17.

beginning of the Patristic period -- that is, the period of the fathers of the Church, where Christian literature developed as theological commentary. Church fathers warm up gradually to the idea of a "canon": Irenaeus, disciple of John the Evangelist, uses the word "testament" to refer to other matters; Bishop Papias of Hierapolis in A.D. 120-140 places more weight in his 5-volume commentary on oral tradition than on Gospels; Melito of Sardis seems to know only the Old Testament. Justin makes a first reference to a "canon", mentioning Acts and Revelation of John (but not Paul's epistles, which are mentioned by Ignatius) as authoritative for the first time, but includes extra material. Paul's epistles are widely read beginning possibly with a collection ca. 100 a.d., except that the epistle to the Hebrews is questioned, as are most of the other epistles and the Gospel of John. Marcion's inadequate collection -- an expurgated Luke and ten epistles -- appears to give new impetus to attempts to fix the canon; by the middle of the second century there appears to be a "firmly circumscribed canon", including OT and NT, although these texts still are not considered inviolable: Tatian composes a "Diatessaron" or harmony of the gospels, which actually becomes the standard gospel in the Syriac church until the 5th century. And, around the year 200, whereas Theopilus of Antioch sees the Gospels and Pauline epistles as authoritative, Serapion of Antioch read the Gospel of Peter to his congregation until finding out that it was heretical. During the third century, variations in the canon are still evident, as the transition from oral tradition to scripture continues. John is still disputed, and the epistles are not set. Irenaeus excludes some epistles and includes the Shepherd of Hermas; Tertullian has a concept of a fixed Bible but does not state its canon. Clement of Alexandria and Origen recognize

a two-part canon; Origen classifies religious works as ὁμολογούμενα. generally acknowledged as belonging to the canon, ψευδῆ, heretical forgeries, and ἀμφιβαλλόμενα, doubtful (2 Peter, Hermas). Eusebius will take up Origen's model, declaring as νόθα or false the Acts of Paul, Hermas, Apocalypse of Peter, Barnabas and Didache. Still he is not sure of the universal epistles nor of the Apocalypse. Moreover, the contemporary *Codex Claromantanus* accepts Hermas, the Acts of Paul and the Apocalypse of Peter. Thus, it is not until the fourth century that the canon as we know it is completed. As we have seen, it "grew together in a long process."[69] Cyril of Jerusalem and Gregory of Nazianus mention a 26-book canon, excluding the Apocalypse, and only Athanasius, in 367, mentions the 27-book canon that we are familiar with today. (In the Orthodox East, the Apocalypse to John is not firmly accepted until the 10th century.) In any case, we can say with confidence that by the fourth century "The fundamental decision has been taken: the church has a holy scripture of Old and New Testaments, which stands as a closed entity (despite variations...) against the... heretical writings."[70] It is against this background, and in this genre of presumably factual religious writing, that the second stage of our fictional romance will evolve.

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[69]Wilhelm Schneemelcher, ed., *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 1, p. 33.

[70]Ibid., p. 32. Indeed, the development of early church dogma was a function of setting apart orthodox Christianity from other sects, whether mystery cults like Mithraism or heretical Christianity; by the fourth century, such efforts were formalized; according to Price, "In a addition to its efforts to define an orthodox school, early medieval Christianity developed by consciously debating its posture with regard to the pagan past.... The most structured exercise in intellectualizing Christianity took place formally in the Church council." (B.B. Price, *Medieval Thought*, pp. 3, 32.)

3. Christianized Romance: The Apocrypha

Beside these writings, however, there stands a body of scripture rejected by the church for reasons of dating, doctrine, or authenticity. Some is heretical; the Nag Hammadi finds show that by the 2nd century there were enough Gnostic works to form an entire other New Testament. Some other works were recommended as private reading but not for religious rites. These vary in subject matter and date of composition; some, like the authorized scriptures, are very early and set oral traditions to writing. Others at a later date set down traditions passed down in certain churches (for example the Gnostic works of the Coptic church of Egypt). Some attempt to fill gaps in the canonized gospels -- for example the Infancy Gospels, which, as popular reading, influenced the depiction of the Nativity scene in Medieval painting and up to the present day. Some tell new stories about persons of the New Testament, often of local interest to places where apostles, for instance, traveled. Some supplement the teachings of the canonical texts; the early works reflect a variety of thought; later ones are overtly polemical, propagating heretical doctrines. We need not delve into the heretical writings here, but we should note that many apocryphal works, particularly acts of apostles, appear also to be written as entertainment. According to Schneemelcher, "the oldest tradition very soon fell under the influence of the forms of Greco-Roman literature."[71] Indeed, "For a part of the apocrypha (in particular the Acts of the Apostles), the motive of 'entertainment' has also been assumed, and here links with.. ancient literature (e.g. the romance) have been

[71]Wilhelm Schneemelcher, ed. *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 1, p. 51.

pointed out... But it should not be overlooked that these pieces... were intended to serve not so much for 'entertainment' in our sense but rather for 'edification'."[72]

We shall now turn to some of these works to see how the romance adapted itself to these new requirements of its Christian public, but also how it kept its form, as well as its message, intact. An early example of the Christian romance genre is the "Paul and Thecla" story, which figures in the apocryphal Acts of Paul. Eusebius ranks this story among the disputed works; Origen and Hippolytus quote from it, so that although it is not canonized it is not heretical; later, Symeon Metaphrastes includes a life of Thecla in his collection.[73] Tertullian, however, c. 198-200, rejects it because of the role of Thecla, a woman, in the church: "If those who read the writings that falsely bear the name of Paul adduce the example of Thecla to maintain the right of women to teach and to baptize, let them know that the presbyter in Asia who produced this document, as if he could of himself add anything to the prestige of Paul, was removed from his office after he had been convicted and had confessed that he did it out of love for Paul."[74] The work, which survives in fragments, was probably compiled from various legends and inventions for the purpose of edification.[75] It follows Paul from Damascus to the cities of the Eastern Mediterranean -- Jerusalem, Antioch, Iconium, Myra, Sidon, Tyre, Smyrna, Ephesus, Philippi, Corinth, and Rome where he preached, performed miracles, and was

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[72]Wilhelm Schneemelcher, ed., *New Testament Apocrypha,* vol. 1, p. 56.

[73]J.P. Migne, ed., *Patrologiae Graecae,* Vol. 115.

[74]Wilhelm Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, Vol. 2, pp. 323-4.

[75]Ibid., pp. 329-30.

finally martyred.

The Paul and Thecla story survives also as an independent text. Paul preaches at Iconium, and is heard by Thecla, who is converted and abandons her fiancé the day of the wedding. The fiancé has Paul imprisoned and expelled; Thecla, who visits him in prison, is condemned to die at the stake. Rain and hail save her, and she follows Paul to Antioch after catching up to him in a burial vault where he was staying. Here, a scorned Syrian arranges to have her thrown to the arena. Numerous beasts are thrown against her, but a lioness protects her until she gets in a pool of water and baptizes herself. The seals swimming there die, and she is protected as by a halo of fire from the other beasts. She converts a noblewoman, who takes her as her daughter, but then goes after Paul. She stays with him until he sends her back to Iconium and to Seleucia to preach. (Her fiancé has since died.) She converts many and then dies peacefully.[76] This section, which is believed to retell a local legend, shows clearly the transfer of the two main themes of Pagan romance to Christianity: travel, separation and reunion -- although in a platonic relationship which shifts the emphasis, at least superficially, from physical to spiritual fulfillment -- and initiation as symbolic death and resurrection: Paul's imprisonment and hiding, Thecla's near burning, and the wild beast/baptism scene which empower the heroine to do the work of God.

Another Christianized romance from the *Apocrypha* is the Pseudo-Clementine "Recognitions", probably from the 3rd century, which exists in the Latin translation of Rufinus and two summaries in Greek. In form it is even closer to the Pagan romances:

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[76]Wilhelm Schneemelcher, ed., *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 2, pp. 330-331.

separation, travel, reunion. Clement is born in Rome, but his mother and twin brothers disappear. His father goes after them and disappears also; Clement, grown up, studies philosophy but decides to find Paul and follow him when he hears about the Son of God. Paul preaches and triumphs over Simon Magus; Clement becomes his disciple and is reunited with his family. Schneemelcher notes that "These recognitions... as also other motives of the story bring the Clementines into intimate connection with the profane romances in which precisely such developments are usual."[77] Interest here, however, -- as in popular taste -- has shifted to the religious content; its emphasis is not so much on the acts of the persons as on theology. The "Clementines" not only tell a story, but also "communicate the Christian doctrine... or certain outward forms of it apologetically and systematically."[78]

The "Shepherd of Hermas", of the early third century, is an "apocalyptic" work which is interesting in its use of allegory. The story, whose old Latin "vulgate" version offers the conclusion missing in the Greek fragment, is of a series of dreams where Hermas, contemplating the beauty of his former lover, is shown the impropriety of such thoughts by an old lady symbolizing the Church. In a series of visions she imparts to him the beauty of the faith, using a tower as an allegory of Christianity, and seven beautiful maidens as the virtues. Meanwhile, the old lady becomes increasingly younger and more beautiful, and then vanishes after showing him a sea-monster representative of coming affliction. In his fifth and last vision, Hermas sees a shepherd who teaches him, through

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[77]Wilhelm Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, Vol. 2, p. 532.

[78]Ibid.

parable and allegory, about the faith. Finally, Christ himself appears to him.[79] This work is important because the use of allegory continues in the Medieval West, possibly influenced by the Greek bestiary *Physiologus* and allegories in the Byzantine romances;[80] moreover, under this different guise, the skeleton of this story is essentially the same as in the other romances: Hermas is separated from the beautiful girl, but finds her again -- in the guise of the Church! Moreover, through the initiation of the five apocalyptic dreams he progresses from a worldly life leading to death to the personal salvation of faith.

Wilmotte cites these works and some others, including the story of Joseph the Carpenter and the gospel of the infancy of Christ, as carrying on the tradition of the romance from antiquity to the Middle Ages.[81] Although we have insisted on the romance as a strictly fictional genre, with a stock plot and theme, we are forced to trace in this middle period the survival of its structure in works not altogether fitting this definition for lack of a more direct tradition. Thus, the link with the twelfth-century romance will be the Saints' Lives.

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[79]Wilhelm Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha,* vol. 2, pp. 632-3.

[80]Professor Thomas Heffernan of the University of Tennessee points out that these are not the only sources of allegory for the period, and cites Philo Judaeus' first century allegory of the Old Testament. Again, however, we note that Hellenistic culture and thought had so saturated the Judaic world of this period, that to separate Hebrew from Greek tradition is nigh impossible -- for example in the attribution of the Old Testament Apocrypha.

[81]M. Wilmotte, *De l'Origine du roman en France*, p. 13.

CHAPTER VI.

ANTONY AND SYMEON: THE HAGIOGRAPHIC CONNECTION

1. From Apocrypha to Saints' Lives

The middle of the fourth century is the line of demarcation between these Christianized romances and hagiography or Saints' Lives. As the canon became more and more firmly fixed, the creative outlet for religious stories could no longer be a falsified account of early events. As this medium exhausted itself, the Saint's Life would adopt the motifs and themes of the previous apocryphal tale.[82] Nevertheless, the dividing line is not clear, some apocrypha still being written after the establishment of the canon. According to Schneemelcher, "the transition from the one category to the other is... a lengthy process."[83]

Eventually apocryphal romances do disappear, so that the Saint's Life becomes the sole vehicle for the continuation of the motifs of the romance through the Middle Ages. According to Norman Baynes, the Saints' Lives, which originate in Byzantium, progress from the martyred saint to several other formulas: "During the period of persecution the

[82]See Thomas Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, (New York, 1988). It should perhaps also be stated here that, although there are many lives of martyrs which pre-date the Apocrypha, (see B.B. Price, *Medieval Thought*, (Oxford, 1992), pp. 11-12; she points out their role as immitators of Christ,) our interest is in those lives, particularly of ascetic saints, which carry on the motifs of the romance, and these, indeed, follow, the first being Athanasius' life of Antony.

[83]Wilhelm Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, Vol. 1, p. 54.

virtues of the Christian champions of the faith had been recorded in the Acts of the Martyrs, of those who had borne the supreme witness to their Lord in the surrender of their life. But when the persecution had ceased in the fourth century it was by his life and not by his death that the Christian established his loyalty to his Master, and the record of the conflict with evil and the passionate struggle towards perfection created a new type of literature."[84] Indeed, in their book on the Byzantine Saint's Life, Elizabeth Dawes and Norman Baynes categorize the lives between those of bishops, such as St. John the Almsgiver who, from simple layman was appointed Patriarch and used his position to build for the poor and homeless, peasants, such as St. Theodore the Sykeote -- these give the only glimpse we have of peasant life in Byzantium, as formal literature is overwhelmingly pedantic and concerned with life at the Court in Constantinople--, hermits like St. Daniel Stylite, and monastic saints like St. Pachomius, who established the first monastic order. Baynes also mentions patron saints, such as St. Tychon, patron of Cypriot vinegrowers, and popular saints like St. Simeon of Edesa, the "fool for Christ".[85]

Of these, Christopher Walter's study *Art and Ritual of the Byzantine Church* will argue that the bishop's life becomes dominant by the eleventh century, for practical reasons relating to the rigid sacramental form that worship in the Eastern Church had evolved to; Byzantine art and literature, in his view, are more expressionist than classical

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[84]Elisabeth Dawes and Norman H. Baynes, ed., *Three Byzantine Saints,* (Oxford, 1948), ix.

[85]Ibid., p. 72.

humanist, in that "aesthetic values are subordinated... to the needs of the cult and to the communication of ideas."[86] Through his study of Byzantine art, he concludes that in the beginning, when Mystery Cults and Christianity replaced Emperor Worship in the empire, the trappings of the emperor, his throne, etc. were transposed in Byzantine art to the throne of God. As the centuries passed, particularly after the iconoclastic period (8th to 9th c.), the church slowly detached herself from the Emperor, strengthening the position of bishops and enabling the church to survive the fall of the Empire. Thus, by the eleventh century,

> "a well-structured ecclesiology had been elaborated. It enabled the church to survive and flourish after the Empire had collapsed; it has undergone little modification since that time... The Church was founded when Christ instituted the Eucharist and gave communion to the apostles. He did this as high priest and universal patriarch. The apostles transmitted to bishops Christ's sacerdotal office. Bishops constitute a hierarchy, whose principal offices are to teach orthodox doctrine and to adore the triumphant Christ. The supreme act of adoration is to offer Christ to himself under the form of the consecrated bread and wine. Illuminated from above, bishops concelebrate; communion is established between them by partaking of the same bread and drinking from the same chalice. Meanwhile, the highest in the hierarchy, because they are pure spirits, angels offer the same homage to the triumphant Christ."[87]

Walter claims that in this climate lives of saintly bishops become more common, until they represent the majority of lives in the fourteenth century.[88]

All along, as Père Delehaye explains, numerous pagan survivals mark the Saints' Lives, underscoring their cementing role between the Hellenistic and twelfth-century

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[86]Christopher Walter, *Art and Ritual of the Byzantine Church*, (London, 1982), pp. 1-2.

[87]Ibid., p. 249.

[88]Ibid, p. 14.

romance.[89] Although we will not digress into specific examples of pagan cult symbolism, we shall presently focus on the transfer of hellenistic literary motifs into hagiography.

2. The Ascetic Lives

We shall return to the Eastern Church and her ceremonies at the proper time; for the moment, we must shift our attention. Baynes notes that "The figure of Christ as it was represented in the mosaics of Byzantine churches was so majestic and remote that common folk felt that they needed a mediator who would represent them in the courts of Heaven. The humanity of the Saviour tended to be obscured."[90] Baynes notes that in this situation ordinary Byzantines turned not to the bishops for assistance, but to ascetic Saints: "When you feel that death is near it is to the saint on his pillar that you look for a letter which shall grant you absolution for past sins... in this world too the ascetic saint was not only the people's champion against injustice, he was the source of a healing power more potent than that of any doctor."[91] We also must turn to these ascetic saints to return to the trail of the thread of our romance.

First, we must understand what it means to be an ascetic saint. The name comes from the Greek "ἄσκησις"; exercise or training. In the Byzantine world, according to

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[89]See Hippolyte Delehaye, *The Legends of the Saints,* (Norwood, 1974).

[90]Elizabeth Dawes and Norman H. Baynes, ed., *Three Byzantine Lives,* p. x.

[91]Ibid., p. xi.

Baynes, a double standard existed in the behavior expected of ordinary, worldly humans and those who seek perfection. For the ascetic, the battle is twofold: he must fight his own body as a source of temptation, "strangling... the body" as St. Paul or St. Luke the Stylite would put it, and he must also fight demons who attempt to make him fail.[92] In the process, the Saint undergoes an initiation which assures his victory and gives him powers of healing making him a true Apostle of Christ. (Such powers did not seem extraordinary for the Byzantines; Baynes notes that the Saints Cosmas and Damian vowed to take no gifts for their healing.[93] After all, Christ had promised miracles "greater than these" which He had performed, and He would not lie.[94] In the Byzantine world, relics abounded, often bearing the miraculous power of their saint, such as bits of his cloth, bread, water, dust from his dwelling, or a church named after him.)

According to Baynes, the first life of an ascetic saint is that of Saint Anthony by Athanasius, Patriarch of Alexandria. "He chose as his theme the ascent of the saint from strength to strength in his pilgrimage towards the ultimate goal--the vision of God. And this development in the spiritual life of the Christian 'athlete' determined the traditional shape of the biography of the Christian saint."[95] As we shall see, the life of Saint Anthony follows the typical trajectory of the ascetic saint's life: he lives for twenty years in a deserted fort, until some pilgrims break down the door. Anthony came "as from a

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[92]Elizabeth Dawes and Norman H. Baynes, *Three Byzantine Lives*, pp. ix-x.

[93]Ibid., pp. xi-xii.

[94]Ibid., p. xii.

[95]Ibid., p. ix.

secret shrine, initiated into the mysteries and indwelt by God." His initiatory experience offers him the power, through grace, to perform miracles and healing. St.Luke, in a tenth-century life, undergoes a similar experience, leaving his cave after having obtained the gift of perfect endurance.[96] Shortly, we shall see the importance of this transformation for our topic. For the moment, note that the quest of the saint is to some extent a symbolic initiation into God's mysteries, which Christ spoke of to his disciples: "unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God."[97]

We might also mention at this point what Baynes calls "the peculiar form of the ascetic life which St. Simeon had devised for himself in Syria."[98] Indeed, St. Simeon is the first of a group of Byzantine saints known as Stylites, who chose to live on top of a column. This peculiar contraption was built on a base with ascending steps to a platform on which was built a column on top of which was an enclosure with a balustrade surrounding it. The Saint lived in this enclosure for years, occasionally receiving visitors by means of a ladder. (Baynes notes that "alousia" or refraining from bathing, was considered a virtue at the time. Moreover, "stasis" or standing motionless, which many stylites would do, often remaining standing all day and night, usually in prayer, or sometimes alternating sitting and standing, was considered important symbolism in the fight to control the flesh.)

In Simeon's case, the column seemed to be a necessity. The 5th-century saint

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[96]Elizabeth Dawes and Norman H. Baynes, *Three Byzantine Lives,* p. x.

[97]Ibid., p. x.

[98]Ibid., p. xiii.

grew up as a poor, illiterate shepherd boy near Antioch. When he heard the beatitudes, he entered a monastery to become a monk, but the monastic life was incompatible with his desire for mortification. He therefore left the monastery, and shut himself in a cell for three years. Afterwards, he moved to a neighboring height where he attached himself to a stone so that he might not move beyond his outdoor enclosure. Afterwards, he remained standing for four years despite the scorching sun, the rain and the snow. When pilgrims came in hope of a miracle or to retrieve a relic, he had a column built to preserve his solitude. Twice augmented, the column finally stood forty cubits high. He stood on the column for thirty years, praying night and day, except for two periods each day when he spoke to visitors, giving moral counsel, settling disputes, and performing miracles. After his death, a fight with the Saracens ensued before his body could be carried in procession to Antioch.[99]

Others followed Simeon's example: Simeon the younger, who squatted on his heels for a year, Luke, and Daniel, who set his column up on the European side of the Bosporus near Constantinople. Actually Daniel had two columns rather than one, his dwelling balanced between the two. Moreover, when Basilicus, a victorious general fighting the Vandals and Monophysite heretics, attempted to dethrone the emperor Zeno, Daniel came down from his column to the rescue of the fleeing emperor. In all Daniel led a long and successful life, from 409 to 493 a.d. He lived with his parents for twelve years, spent twenty-five in the monastery, five visiting ascetes, nine years shut up in a former Pagan temple, then ascended to his column where he remained for thirty-three

[99]Elizabeth Dawes and Norman H. Baynes, *Three Byzantine Lives,* p. 3.

years and three months. This indeed was a marvelous feat, though perhaps not as marvelous as Simeon's, since eventually he had to accept a covering.[100] Nevertheless, column-mounting seems generally to be a sport conducive to Byzantine ascetes. Not so for Westerners, however: Berschin notes how certain would-be saints tumbled from their perch.[101]

It will soon become important in our study to note the initiatory pattern of these lives. It will be recalled that St. Anthony underwent his initiation during his voluntary imprisonment; likewise, St. Simeon is shut up before receiving his powers and mounting his column, and St. Daniel is enclosed in the Pagan temple. At this point it is noted in his "life" that "He bolted the door and left only a small window open... After a space of nine years had elapsed, the servant of God fell into an ecstasy... and saw a huge pillar of cloud...and blessed Symeon saying to him 'come here to me, Daniel'."[102]

3. *The initiatory motif in Saints' Lives*

Allison Elliott observes that the model of the hellenistic romance is not only confined to the Christianized romances that replaced it, but is also carried over to the Saint's Life: "In some of the earliest accounts of non-martyr saints the imprint of Greek

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[100]Elizabeth Dawes and Norman H. Baynes, *Three Byzantine Lives*, p. 4. Also see Delehaye.

[101]Indeed, remnants of Byzantine saints' *stylae* remain as a testament to their accomplishment.

[102]Elizabeth Dawes and Norman H. Baynes, *Three Byzantine Lives*, p. 18.

romance is clearly discernible, since the authors appear to have turned to such tales for structure and incident when they came to fabulate their Christian heroes."[103] Later Saints' Lives, as well as the Romances of the High Middle Ages, will in turn borrow from these: "In many cases I suspect that the authors of these later works drew upon a common stock of narrative themes."[104]

Indeed, as Allison Elliott's book *Roads to Paradise* insightfully demonstrates,[105] the continuation of the Hellenistic romance genre through the Christian Middle Ages took place particularly with the transfer of motifs to the Lives of Hermit Saints. Following Altmann's classification, she labels the early martyred Saints' Lives as epics in the martyr's direct confrontation of good versus evil ("...the binary unambiguous structure of the *passio* resembles the Old French Epic. Good and evil are diametrically opposed."[106]), and those of ascetic hermits, such as we have just encountered, as romances, involving travel, mystery, and the regeneration theme. She concentrates on the most blatantly fictional hermits' lives to show how the romance genre, with its adventure and theme elements intact, lives on in a religious context. Thus, she convincingly contradicts Eggert's study of Hellenism in France of a century ago, which concludes that,

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[103]Allison Elliott, *Roads to Paradise,* (Hanover, 1987), p. 46.

[104]Ibid., p. 182.

[105]Although Elliott, as a structuralist, tends to overgeneralize, basing her conclusions on the most fictitious accounts among hagiographic works of the period and particularly those that seem to best fit her mold, her theories are very helpful in understanding the transitional phase between the romances of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages by identifying the generic elements of romance in the ascetic Saints' Lives.

[106]Allison Elliott, *Roads to Paradise*, p. 36.

due to the fear of Paganism by Latin church fathers such as Tertullian, Jerome and Augustine, literary production was halted: "...simplifier... l'éducation en la ramenant au strict enseignement évangélique c'était arrêter... tout développement littéraire, par défiance des périls qu'elle pouvait engendrer."[107]

Focusing on the lives of Saint Onuphrius -- a Coptic saint whose name, interestingly, was associated with Osiris--, Saint Mary of Egypt, Saints Anthony and Macarius, Saint Paul of Thebes, Saint Malchus, Saint Hilarion, Saint Pachomius, Saint Ephrem of Syria, Saint Basel the Great, and Saint Symeon Stylites, Elliott distills a formula or "narrative archetype" for the Life of the Desert Saint which closely resembles the mythological archetypes of the mystery religions and their manifestations in Hellenistic romance.

According to Elliott, "hagiographic romance" often repeats the following themes:

A. Before the departure, marriage, penance, or the desire for a more holy life.

B. A Journey: sometimes without food and water, sometimes guided by animals or angels in disguise.

C. Discovery of a place: a cave or cell, sometimes with a dead body.

D. An encounter involving mistaken identity, miraculous knowledge, unusual appearance, miraculous food or an uncorrupted body.

E. A tale: new acquaintenance's life story, which recapitulates main plot.

F. A request, often denied, necessitating another journey.

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[107]Eggert, *L'Hellénisme en France*, (Paris, 1869), pp. 69-70.

G. Burial; often with lions.[108]

Some of these themes will jump out at the reader as previously encountered in our Hellenistic romances: a departure sometimes to avoid unwanted marriage or disapproval of relatives, a journey, though guided more by the goddess Chance than by Providence, in one romance, the discovery of the mummified body of a fisherman's wife, numerous encounters, the relation of a tale, usually by a fellow prisoner, which recapitulates the protagonist's adventures though not always with the same positive outcome, and burials, usually false, symbolizing the rebirth offered by Mystery Religions. Elliott systematizes these motifs, and presents a convincing interpretation of their new role in their now Christianized form. Her conclusion is that the Saint's Life represents a ceremonial rite of passage, through which the Saint attains Eternal Life. In Mircea Eliade's famous words, it is "The road... from the profane to the sacred, from the ephemeral and illusory to reality and eternity."[109]

Elliott's analysis of this transitional journey demonstrates its similarities with the romantic precedents and antecedents. She notes for example, that "The motif of flight from an unwelcome marriage or suitor is present in most Greek romances... in the *Ephesiaca*, for example, Habrocomes slipped away secretly to find Anthia," as in "Paul and Thecla", Paul of Thebes, St. Malchus, Abraham of Quiduna, St. Euphrosyne and St. Macarius the Roman.[110] The Byzantine account of the St. Abraham life by Symeon

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[108]Allison Elliott, *Roads to Paradise*, pp. 59-60.

[109]Ibid., p. 171.

[110]Ibid., pp. 85-86, 92.

Metaphrastes offers the following account:

> "In the bridal chamber itself Abraham, most resplendent, sat with the bride as being in truth the bridegroom. But while the shouting and the festive noise filled the house, as is to be expected, and while everyone was busy with the table and with the banqueters, Christ, who is the hidden lover of our salvation to the mind, and of our souls the spiritual bridegroom and escort of the bride -- that is of those souls worthy of His bridal chambers -- silently sent down to the chamber a sweet ray of that highest and ineffable brightness that surrounds Him, as to one who attracted it, and most sweetly illuminated the eyes of Abraham, as if summoning him to Himself and drawing him by means of the light. For Christ most clearly loved the beauty of Abraham's soul, and He wished to make him dwell in rooms and chambers far better than those [on Earth]...Then no longer did [Abraham] wish to take either food or drink. When the feasting was over and the guests departed each to his own home, he crept out of the house on quiet foot, nor was he seen by any one save by God alone Who called him."[111]

Elliott notes the Lévi-Straussian oppositions between the world the saint leaves behind and the one he encounters; (cave/house, simplicity/splendor, nudity/clothing, chastity/sexuality, raw/cooked, virtue/vice, etc.)[112] The contrast makes for a magical essence in a setting removed from the rational world. Like the magical forest or island of earlier and later romances, it is an outdoor place isolated from civilization.[113] It is only in such a magical "liminal" space that the symbolic drama of the narrative can be played out, particularly the central theme of death and resurrection which, as we have seen, is central to all of the texts concerned. Here, the chronotrope of the hagiographical

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[111]Allison Elliott, *Roads to Paradise,* p. 94.

[112]Ibid., pp. 95-102.

[113]Ibid., p. 205.

romance[114] becomes the "liminal" or transitional stage in a continuum of ephemeral life, death, eternal life, or in van Gennep's terminology, the "margin" between "separation" and "aggregation".[115]

Elliot observes that "Numerous myths, folktales, and romances tell of symbolic death and resurrection--a descent to the underworld, a miraculous sleep. In a number of legends of the desert saints, after the hero has successfully escaped the world of culture he must experience a form of death, burial and rebirth prior to his ultimate attainment of transcendent purity. This emblematic death prefigures his real death and resurrection into Paradise but even more it serves as a *rite de passage*, a purificatory ritual in which the saint sheds his cultural existence in preparation for his new way of life. It marks or confirms his step across the division between the cooked and the raw."[116] She continues, "In initiation rites, the biological order of birth and death is paradoxically reversed as 'one dies to become a little child'. The old identity must be shed before the new one is assumed... in... vita... actual death is present in the theme of burial and its attendant miraculous motif, burial by lions, but nearly every other part of the journey has a death-related motif... the traveler may fall to the ground 'as if dead' (Onuphrius, Serapion); the first stop may be a tomb (the Apostle Paul in the Acts of Paul and Thecla, Antony, Abraham, Paul of Thebes in the Arabic version), a prison (the three monks), or other enclosed space symbolic of death. The traveler may find a dead body (Paphnutius,

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[114]This is Bakhtin's phrase for the romance's time-space continuum.

[115]Allison Elliott, *Roads to Paradise*, p. 179.

[116]Ibid., pp. 109-110.

Macarius, Zosimas), pointing to the fact that the meeting was purposeful, not coincidental. The request is often for burial (Paul of Thebes, Onuphrius, Mark the Athenian, Mary the Egyptian)."[117] She goes on to cite numerous symbolic deaths in desert saints' lives. Macarius is buried up to his neck for three years as penance for abandoning his bride; Abraham stayed in an abandoned cell; Symeon Stilytes was buried up to his chest, in an abandoned well, and in a tomblike enclosure before assuming his perch on the column; Paul of Thebes, in an Arabic version of his legend, spent three days praying in a tomb; St Anthony withdrew to a tomb; as did Zeno -- from a palace. Marcianus lived in a tomb-like enclosure; Palladius tells of a girl who lived in a tomb for ten years to avoid tempting suitors, and St. Theodore lived in a hole under an altar for several months and in a small cave for two years.[118] This symbolic or false burial, a staple of the romance genre, is sometimes replaced in the Saint's Life by a displaced burial: the Saint burying someone else: Antony buries Paul of Thebes, Zosimas buries Mary of Egypt, Onuphrius buries an unnamed hermit, Paphnutius buries Onuphrius and a dead Anchorite, Macarius a dead lioness, and is in turn buried by his pet lion cubs.[119]

Elliott remarks that "the ascetic's symbolic burial prefigured rebirth for the dark, confining cell was also a womb..." -- a source of nourishment & spiritual rebirth,[120] being the transition between what Northrop Frye in *The Secular Scripture* describes as

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[117]Allison Elliott, *Roads to Paradise*, pp. 175-176.

[118]Ibid., pp. 100, 104-107.

[119]Ibid., pp. 108-9.

[120]Ibid., p. 107.

themes of descent and ascent in romance.[121] Elliott notes the obvious borrowing of the burial motif, which occurs in Achilles Tatius and, of course, in Chariton: "The theme of false burial may serve to initiate the journey in Greek romance. For example, in Chariton's romance of *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, the heroine, Callirhoe, kicked in the stomach by her jealous husband, falls into a faint. She is thought to be dead and is buried. She regains consciousness in the tomb, from which she is 'rescued' by grave robbers who determine to sell her at a profit. When her husband learns the truth, he sets off in pursuit."[122] She concludes: "The borrowings... from ancient romance are palpable. The universality of the romance plot enables the hagiographic romance to reach out to common anxieties and aspirations--the thirst for knowledge, the quest into the unknown to answer questions of identity, the search for lost innocence and harmony with the environment, and to use them in the service of its own special form of heroic narrative, the life of the desert saint."[123]

4. The Reception of Saints' Lives

Thus, although the lives of martyrs, whether genuine or purely fictional, with their exaggerated torments of saints at the hands of Pagans may remind us of the pirate motif from the romances -- Altmann describes these Lives as "epic" in that they take place in

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[121]Allison Elliott, *Roads to Paradise*, p. 103.

[122]Ibid., p. 104n.

[123]Ibid., p. 180.

a warlike milieu, where the Saint ends up in the hands of his adversaries, in a "diametrical" confrontation of good versus evil --, the "gradational" lives of hermits or desert saints, who, while not under any immediate threat from a hostile environment, try to improve their inner self through withdrawal from society,[124] are closest to romances, as they involve travel and magical landscapes. They recall the Ancient romances but accommodate the taste of the times for, as Frye notes, "with the rise of the romantic ethos, heroism comes increasingly to be thought of in terms of suffering, endurance and patience...".[125]

In their sufferings, the Saints will anticipate the most poignant moments of later fiction: "Love and death, a fatal love -- in these phrases is summed up... whatever is universally moving in European literature... What stirs lyrical poets to their finest flights is neither the delight of the senses nor the fruitful contentment of the settled couple; nor the satisfaction of love, but its passion. And passion means suffering."[126] Indeed, the displacement of the erotic love of the romances to the higher love of the Divine Being in the Lives intensifies the conflict and very often leads directly to the denouement of

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[124]Allison Elliott, *Roads to Paradise*, p. 16.

[125]Northrop Frye, *The Secular Scripture*, (Cambridge, 1976), p. 88; cited in Elliott, p. 13. This is not to say that such attributes, as Prof. Thomas Heffernan of the University of Tennessee points out, do not recall earlier tales such as the Epic of *Gilgamesh* or the biblical stories of Joseph and Job. The great resemblance of the saints' lives to the romance, however, is in the motif of personal salvation in a symbolic, initiatory death and resurrection, which, of course, is a concept that does not exist when such earlier works are composed. Likewise, it would be foolish to argue that Odysseus' struggle to return to Ithaca and be reunited with his wife, even with a descent to Hades scene, is an allegory of death and symbolic resurrection, since, as we have noted, the concept of a soul, or eternal life, did not exist in the religious milieu of archaic Greece.

[126]Denis DeRougemont, *Love in the Western World,* (New York, 1983), p. 15.

martyrdom, unlike the melodramatic torture and escape of the early romances. According to Wilmotte, "Etudions [le roman] dans la période... où... Chrétien de Troyes en donnera la formule définitive. Nous verrons qu'il n'offrira... presque aucun trait qui, dès le IIe siècle, et à plus forte raison du IIIe au VIe siècle, n'ait servi à exciter, dans les imaginations naïves, ce trouble délicieux de la sensibilité qui, plus tard, assurera la vogue de *l'Astrée* et de *la Nouvelle Héloïse*."[127]

Saints' Lives tend to be repetitious; more emphasis is placed on the exemplary nature of the life than on the veracity of its incidents. Elliott cites an English life of St. Gregory of circa 700 A.D.: "...this work of ours... has been diligently twisted into shape by love rather than knowledge... So let no one be disturbed even if these miracles were performed by any other of the holy saints, since the holy Apostle, through the mystery of the limbs of a single body... concludes that we are all 'members of one another.'... all the saints have everything in common... Hence if anything we have written did not concern this man... yet in his case we have little doubt on the whole that they were true of him too."[128] Elliott makes the same argument for the popularity of these predictable and repetitious stories as we have made about the romance: "The reader knows perfectly well

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[127]M. Wilmotte, *De l'Origine du Roman en France*, p. 12. Cazelles makes the same point: "Retelling a known story and giving it a new significance is... an essential characteristic of literary composition in the vernacular during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Hence the narrative resemblance between... hagiography and romance. An indication of the interaction between hagiography and romance is the tendency of courtly literature either to secularize saintly characters or to sanctify secular heroes, as is the case of the thirteenth-century metamorphosis of Chrétien's chivalric hero into the 'seeker of an ideal which in fact resembles sainthood.'" (Brigitte Cazelles, *The Lady as Saint*, (Philadelphia, 1991), p. 33.)

[128]Allison Elliott, *Roads to Paradise*, p. 6.

the outcome of the martyrdom of a St. George or the ascetic life of a St. Paul of Thebes... As a result, attention is focussed more on the way the story was told, and on small variations in detail."[129]

These Lives will take on the form familiar in the West: description of the parents, miraculous events surrounding his conversion, increase of power, acts, and death.[130] This is the very formula which, as Roderick Beaton points out, can be found in secularized form in the Digenis tale. Thus, supposing the author of that epic romance, displaced after a Byzantine defeat in Asia minor, were drawing on oral traditions of his homeland as well as Ancient literary sources, his immediate frame of reference is that of the Saint's Life, which he will adopt as the format for his composition. Moreover, a parallel process will occur in the West, with *trouvères* drawing on the inspiration of their contact with Byzantium through the Crusades, but using the Saint's Life, most likely in the Latin form, as an immediate frame of reference. As Elliott notes, Saints' Lives were responsible for the "preservation of archaic symbols... paradigms privileged by hagiographic accounts to be easily assimilated.. in... the chivalric romance."[131]

Indeed, one Saint's Life, that of St. Ephrem, seems to bridge the gap perfectly between Hellenistic romance and Digenis Akritas and/or Erec and Enide: "St. Ephrem's exploitation of a horizon of expectation set up by secular romances is clear... The hero sets out as a disguised knight *(militem)* on horseback to rescue a beautiful woman who

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[129]Allison Elliott, *Roads to Paradise*, p. 8.

[130]Except, as Cazelles notes, that a certain localization occurs: "a setting that evokes northern Europe in the thirteenth century." (Brigitte Cazelles, *The Lady as Saint*, p. 8.)

[131]Allison Elliott, *Roads to Paradise*, p. 18.

has been living ‘as if in the belly of a terrible dragon’. He is placed in a situation redolent of sexual temptation but, although he appears to come close to the brink, he does not fall. Salvation is effected through a last-minute recognition scene, and the couple lives... happily ever after. Their days of journeying and adventures are over."[132]

[132]Allison Elliott, *Roads to Paradise*, p. 130.

CHAPTER VII.

EUSTACHE AND MAGDALEN: THE TRANSLATION OF HAGIOGRAPHY

Having established the link between Hellenistic and early Christian literature, we need to consider the transmission of this literature, the Saints' Lives, to the West, and thus consider their role as direct antecedents of the Western romances. In our study, we have discovered three types of Western lives: Western versions of Eastern lives, adaptations suggesting a translation of the saint to the West to justify the presence of his relics, and original Western lives. In considering examples of each of these types, we note everywhere the preservation of the motifs introduced in the previous chapter.

Among the Eastern lives popular in the West are those of Saint Alexis, Saint Mary of Egypt and Saint Thais. The story of Saint Alexis, whose biography comprises one of the earliest poems in Old French, recalls numerous Hellenistic and Early Christian motifs. It exists in a 6th century Syriac version, several Greek versions, including an anonymous 1023 version, and was known to Joseph the Hymnographer in the ninth century. It also exists in numerous western translations, but, according to Kahzdan, "the legend did not spread to Rome until 977; thereafter, it grew very popular in the West."[133]

Alexis' decision to flee from civilization on his wedding night recalls the Thecla story, where the young woman, before her wedding -- in both cases unconsummated relationships --, chooses to follow Paul. (Interestingly, Symeon Metaphrastes preserves a life of Thecla as well as one of Alexis in his collection.) As he attempts to flee the

[133]A. Kazhdan, *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, (Oxford, 1992), p. 66.

"glory of men" a second time, his ship is blown off course in a motif common to most romances we have so far encountered. Thus arriving by a strange coincidence in his father's house, he lives for 17 years under the stairs curiously thinking that thus he would be less of a burden on his family. At the end of the story, the "pope" is the only one capable of loosening the manuscript of his life's story from the dead saint's grasp, a motif that seems to look back to Odysseus' recognition scene in the *Odyssey* and forward to the sword in the stone episode of Robert de Boron's *Merlin*. Interestingly, in a Greek version of the life, it is an "archiepiskopos" (archbishop) who performs this feat, and not the "pope" per se. Of course, the Greek church never recognized the Ecumenical authority of the Pope; Kazhdan notes that there was never a Pope Markianos, which is the name of this archbishop.[134] The trajectory of this life is similar to those of the others we have studied. Although the Saint eventually dies, his body gains miraculous powers through his deprivation, so that he performs many miracles on those who swarm around his corpse.[135]

Jan A. Nelson presents an interesting analysis of the derivation of this legend. According to Nelson, the Syriac version was composed in Edessa as early as 450-475, but was augmented by additions from the legend of St. John the Calybite to form the 6th- to 9th-century Greek version from which the Latin and Old French versions were derived. Nelson points to a further element of fusion in the Latin text -- apparently misunderstood

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[134] A. Kazhdan, *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, p. 66.

[135] Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, (New York, 1969), pp. 347-351; François Halkin has edited a Byzantine version in *Analecta Bollandiana*.

by the Old French poet -- which helps to pinpoint the exact place of transmission from Byzantium to the West.

A specific detail of the Latin version is that of an icon of Christ in Edessa which draws Alexis to the city and which also announces his sanctity. Nelson sees in this a reference to the "Holy Mandylion", a portrait of Christ made by direct contact of a cloth with His face. The story goes, that in New Testament times, the first Christian ruler of Edessa was cured of an affliction by a letter written personally by Christ, or sometimes by a commissioned portrait of Him. In the latter variation, when the artist found himself incapable of capturing His likeness, Christ offered to him an imprint on a cloth which He had brought to His face.[136]

According to legend, this cloth protected the city against Persian invaders (544 A.D.) -- a similar legend, as we shall see, appears later in Constantinople, -- and was able to perform miracles, along with the coverstone from the place where it was concealed. In the tenth century (944), under Constantine Porphyrogenitus, the precious relics were transferred to Constantinople to be protected from the advancing Arabs; they were there when Robert de Clari made his inventory of the city's precious relics two and a half centuries later.

Nelson points to a cult of Saint Alexis among the Greek refugees at the Saint

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[136]Confusion arises from inconsistent accounts, some setting the story during Christ's sojourn on the Earth, while others, opting for historical *vraisemblance*, set it in the second century, during the ruler's actual reign.

Boniface monastery in Rome,[137] where, supposedly, the saint's body could still be found in 987. The Latin translation of his *vita*, (circa 977), gives Saint Boniface's as the final resting place of Alexis, as opposed to the Greek version which gives Saint Peter's. Thus, according to Nelson, it had to be the Greek monks of Saint Boniface's who were responsible for the Latin translation of the Saint Alexis legend, as well as for the reference to the icon of Christ in Edessa, which they, much more than Latins, would have been familiar with.[138]

Mary of Egypt and Thais are similar lives, in that both are stories of sinners seeking purification. The lives both originated in the East, and, according to Cazelles, both figure in the *Vitae Patrum*, "a source of documentation that appears to have particularly attracted [Old French]... poets,... [including] twenty-seven texts, some of which were translated from Greek into Latin before the sixth century."[139] Indeed, according to Berschin, the Thais *vita* was translated in the fifth century by Dionysus Exiguus; Mary of Egypt was brought to the West soon afterwards as part of a series of similar lives of women.[140] According to Attwater, the skeleton of the Mary of Egypt

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[137]We shall see in the following chapter how the iconoclastic period necessitated the beginning of a migration of Greek monks and clerics to Italy.

[138]Jan A. Nelson, "The Holy Mandylion of Edessa and the Legend of St. Alexis," in *Medieval Studies in Honor of Robert White Linker*, (Valencia, 1973), pp. 155-161.

[139]Brigitte Cazelles, *The Lady as Saint*, p. 35. She continues: "the thrust of the *Vitae Patrum* often involves dangerous or exotic journeys during the course of which the saintly protagonist undergoes numerous adventures. Experts have recognized in these hagiographic tales the imprint of Greek novels, evidence of their authors' attempts to emulate secular writing...".

[140]Walter Berschin, *Greek Letters in the Latin Middle Ages*, (Washington, 1988), p. 58.

story, the penitent harlot crossing into Jordan to be a hermit is plausible, without the later elaboration of a "far less credible form... known all over Christendom in the Middle Ages."[141] Kazhdan credits Sophronius of Jerusalem with this elaboration, using elements of Jerome's life of Paul the Hermit. His additions to the story of the ascetic woman include the first person narration of Zosimas (which reminds us of similar narrators, such as Kratandros, in the romances), the theme of redemption of a licentious woman, and the supernatural elements like the burial by lions.[142] In this elaborated version transmitted to the West, Father Zosimas, combing the desert around 300 A.D. for reclusive holy men, comes across a naked woman who asks for his cloak before she can tell him her story. Her appearance is miraculous in her recognition of the monk as well as her levitation. She tells him that, at the age of twelve, in Alexandria, she became a harlot for seventeen years, before making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, using her body to pay for passage. At the church, she is held back from entering until she begs the Virgin Mary for intercession on her behalf. Once inside, a voice tells her that she will find salvation beyond the Jordan, and she is given three coins for three loaves of bread.

In the desert, she got over her carnal desires in the next seventeen years, and spent another thirty years doing penance, all along feeding on the three loaves. Now, she asks for communion on Easter, which she receives from Father Zosimas, walking on water to meet him. On his return the following year, he finds that she had died afterwards, leaving

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[141]Donald Attwater, *A Dictionary of Saints,* (Harmondsworth, 1965), p. 236.

[142]A. Kazhdan, *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, p. 1315.

a note that he bury her. A lion appears and digs the grave.[143] Thus, as we have seen before in Elliott's analysis of hagiographic romance, the lion is associated with the ritual burial, the transition of the saint who has now gained salvation through the ordeal of penance, from earthly to eternal life.

Brigitte Cazelle's study compares the Old French lives with the original:

> "While the twelfth-century life by Adgar is a consciously devotional abridgement that stresses the role of the Virgin Mary in the heroine's conversion and sanctification, the anonymous author of Mary A,... [thirteenth century,] focus[es]... on the beauty of the seductress, on her sinful existence before her conversion, and on the episode that describes the manner in which a lion undertakes to dig her grave... [Thus,] the lengthy description of Mary's sex life prior to her conversion, a description which is meant to warn the public against the evil of the flesh, ends by stressing the world of the flesh in a manner that unwittingly echoes, rather than questions... the... romance...".[144]

Indeed, the most striking difference between the *Vitae Patrum* version and the twelfth-century lives, is the emphasis placed in the former on the framing narrative of Zossimas -- five pages --, which has actually been replaced in the Old French versions by the appeal to the Virgin Mary. This emphasis demonstrates the two important ingredients transmitted to the romance through Christianity: romanesque description and exaltation of the Virgin Mary, which may have been transformed in the twelfth century into worship of Woman.

The Thais story is similar; in fact, Cazelles remarks that a number of the *Vitae Patrum* demonstrate conversion from sin. From her feminist perspective, this implies that

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[143]Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend,* pp. 228-230.

[144]Brigitte Cazelles, *The Lady as Saint,* p. 32.

"female sanctification could only be the result of conversion, and consequently,... [that] innate perfection were an exclusively masculine virtue."[145] According to Cazelles, the fictional Greek life dates from the fourth century, and the Dionysius Exiguus version changes the Thais' obligatory male mentor from "Sarapion" to "Paphnutius".[146] The story is similar to Mary's, except that here, as in the earlier romances, we have the description of the brothel visit intended to rescue the prostitute. After paying her a gold piece, Paphnutius admonished Thais to consider the souls she has ruined, and induces her to burn all the treasures that her beauty had procured for her from the clients who would kill each other to possess her. She asks for penance and is enclosed in a cell with only a small window for food for three years, until the sign of her salvation comes. Thus, her earthly purpose fulfilled, she dies only five days later.[147] Attwater warns, as does Cazelles, that this may be a moral tale without any historical basis, the name Thais lent by Alexander's Egyptian mistress.[148]

According to Cazelles, the French versions of this life, -- *A, B*, and *C*, -- are in some respects livelier in their characterization than the original, but at the same time are weighed down by moralizing.[149] This is certainly true of version *C*, where 65 lines are taken up by an appeal for cleansing of the soul before the narrative actually begins.

145Brigitte Cazelles, *The Lady as Saint*, p. 35.

146Ibid., p. 289.

147Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, pp. 614-616.

148Donald Attwater, *A Dictionary of Saints*, p. 320.

149Brigitte Cazelles, *The Lady as Saint*, pp. 289-302.

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The life of Mary Magdalene is an example of a *vita* rewritten to explain the translation of relics to the West. According to Mycoff, there are widely divergent legends concerning her, but the Eastern tradition has her usually passing away in Jerusalem, or more frequently in Ephesus, following John and the Virgin Mary there. Later lives, however, attempt to account for her relics in France by an account of her arrival there, which again recalls romance. Mycoff argues convincingly that this legend developed from several divergent lives, some having her go into the desert in imitation of the Mary of Egypt life, others having her arrive in Marseilles as an apostle--following those who believed that Christ's appearance to her signifies her elevation to apostolic status, even though she fails to recognize Him.

In any case, the composite story is made up of three parts: events before the Ascension of Christ, arrival at Marseilles and conversion of the Prince, and life as a hermit. The first part, from Mary the repentant prostitute washing Christ's feet with her tears to her seeing Christ after the Resurrection, is already familiar. The continuation of the adventures is actually the beginning of the romance: Mary and a varying number of other apostles are left on a boat to drown, but the boat reaches the coast of France: Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, or more often Marseilles. Here, she preaches at the Pagan temple, and appears to the prince and his wife, asking them to be more charitable. The couple believe her, and ask for a baby, which they have been unable to conceive. Mary

sends them on a pilgrimage to Rome, but the wife dies on the way in childbirth. From Rome, Saint Peter takes the Prince to the Holy Land and, on his return, he finds the woman restored. Both are baptized, and Mary, along with St. Maximius, moves on to Aix, where she goes off to live for thirty years in a cave. When she is found by a priest, she requests that Maximius administer her last rites; she is buried with an odor of sanctity, and St. Maximius declares that he will be buried with her.[150]

The end of the story is that her remains eventually were transferred to Vezelay, perhaps the original motivation for a story of Mary in France. Interestingly, a Greek version from Mount Athos has her remains in Constantinople.[151]

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A story of the third type may be the life of St. Giles. Characterized by the hagiographic encyclopedia *Biblioteca Sanctorum* as "un tessuto di prodigi, allaciati a una cronologia fantastica" this life is of uncertain origin, although the tomb of Giles, or Egidius, in Nimes bears a tenth century inscription and may date back to Merovingian times.[152] In the tenth-century life, very popular in the West, Giles is an Athenian noble who performs many miracles, including curing a sick man by giving him his cloak.

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[150]David A. Mycoff, *A Critical Edition of the Legend of Mary Magdalena*, (Salzburg, 1985), pp. 4-21. Her legend appears in Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, pp. 355-364.

[151]See François Halkin, ed, *Annalecta Bollandiana.*

[152]*Biblioteca Sanctorum,* p. 958.

Sailors take him to Rome and Arles, where he continues to perform miracles, but seeks solitude in a forest cave, nourished by a hind's milk. Wounded by hunters who chased the hind, he prayed not to be restored since "virtue is perfected by infirmity". He refused to be healed, but finally agreed to head a monastery built for him, and performed many more miracles before his death around 700.[153]

This life shares many of the previous motifs, including travel and the quest for perfection through isolation or trials. Perhaps a weakness of this particular life, however, is the apparent perfection of the saint in his early life, since the power to perform miracles is always with him. The life gives the impression that his suffering, particularly his refusal of medical care, is unnecessary. Perhaps the target audience, however, appreciated the legend of St. Giles as an imitation of Christ.

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We will finally turn, before laying Saints' Lives to rest, to a story of particular interest to our thesis because of its uncannily precise connections to the past and the future, the legend of St. Eustache. According to Bershin, this life was translated for the first time during what he terms the "Byzantine phase" of the papacy, between the Byzantine defeat of the Goths in 553 and the middle of the eighth century. During this period, the first translations of the lives of Anastasius the Persian, Bonifatius of Tarsus, Eustathius, Adrian and Natalia, Nicholas, Sergius and Bacchus, and Theodore were

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[153]Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, pp. 515-519.

undertaken in Rome. Kazhdan notes that the origin of the story, with its folktale motifs and its setting in the Roman Empire, is unclear, but it originated as a Byzantine life adapted later by Symeon Metaphrastes. In the West, he notes that it was known in the ninth and tenth centuries.[154]

The story of this general under Trajan begins with the motif, possibly oriental, of a white stag in the forest which has a cross between its horns. An image of Christ asks him to get baptized, and he receives the sacrament along with his wife.[155] The following section recalls Job: God, through the stag, informs Eustache that he will suffer and lose his honor, but will eventually be restored. Like Job, he loses his men and his flocks, his house is robbed and his children are left without clothes.

But, his story continues, in the romantic vein: the family sets off for Egypt and, since Eustache has no money, he is forced to abandon his wife on the ship to a lecher and land with only his children. As he is about to cross a stream, the first child taken over is carried away by a wolf; as he goes after it, the other is taken by a lion. Eventually, Eustache is restored to his post in honor by Trajan, who has sent after him. In the meantime, his sons, who have been raised separately by villagers, are both recruited into his army, and they stop by an inn where his wife, whose virtue was preserved when her violator died unexpectedly, is the innkeeper. The family is reunited by a remarkable change of fortune which, needless to say, is reminiscent of its antecedents in romance.

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[154]A. Kazhdan, *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, p. 752.

[155]A similar stag will later appear in the Vulgate version of the Grail romance, suggesting that in the later medieval romances, we are never too far from the hagiographical forerunners.

Uncharacteristically, however, this romance-like hagiography ends in the tragedy of martyrdom, for the family is eventually burned in the belly of a bronze bull by the new Emperor, Hadrian, when Eustache refuses to sacrifice to the Pagan gods.[156]

Père Delehaye, who has studied the legend closely, notes that although there are numerous versions, including the ancient one in the *Acta Sanctorum*, the 10th century Byzantine life by Metaphrastes, numerous prose and verse Latin versions as well as versions in the vulgar languages, they all are essentially uniform, and "toutes les versions connues reproduisent la substance de [la] légende grecque."[157] According to Delehaye, many motifs in the life, as with numerous folktale motifs in general, are traceable ultimately to ancient India, but such a source, "combien éloignée", was probably not in the conscious mind of the authors of the legend.[158] Indeed, the particular format of the story has very close immediate antecedents, as we can tell from our previous chapters, in the Hellenistic romance as well as the *New Testament Apocrypha*. In his recent book on "sacred biographies", Thomas Heffernan makes a similar observation, noting the influence of Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus on the formation of this life:

> "Christian sacred biography not only constructs plots which develop narratives of spiritual *peregrinatio* but also employs elements more commonly thought of as picaresque: long, arduous journeys with accompanying perils, saccarine scenes of separation and return (inspired by the pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions*), depictions of maidens being threatened sexually by pirates or other brigands, and a veritable bestiary

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[156]Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, pp. 555-561.

[157]Hippolyte Delehaye, *Mélanges d'hagiographie grecque et latine*, (Brussels, 1966), p. 239.

[158]Ibid., pp. 234-7.

> of miraculous beasts. Virtually all saints' lives exhibit some of these characteristics, while some, such as the *vita Sancti Eustachii* to name just one, contains them all."[159]

Delehaye makes the connection to Heliodorus and *Apollonius of Tyre*, other similar lives, and the Clementine Recognitions, where we have noted that Clement, his twin brothers and his parents are separated by a shipwreck; the brothers are sold as slaves, but are reunited through Saint Peter when they become his followers and he encounters the mother as a beggar and the father in a discussion over Providence. He also gives one other example, a Greek story of a Xenophon who lives in Byzantium with his wife and sons, whom he sends to Beirut to study law. They return when he gets ill, are sent back to Beirut to continue their studies, but are shipwrecked. They independently become monks, one at Tyre and the other at Jerusalem. The reunion takes place when one finds the other, and the parents meet them, thanks to a dream, in Jerusalem, where they convert to Christianity.[160]

Delehaye goes on to point out medieval examples of the transmission of the motifs of this legend, in tales about Octavien, Ogier the Dane, *La Belle Hélène, le Chevalier Ysembrace,* and the English version of the *Gesta Romanorum.* The most striking resemblance, however, is the one most crucial for our thesis: the survival of the Byzantine romantic motif is present in the first work attributed to Chrétien de Troyes, the greatest author of the Western Medieval Romance. The work in question is his

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[159]Thomas Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, p. 142.

[160]Hippolyte Delehaye, *Mélanges d'hagiographie grecque et latine,* p. 221.

Guillaume d'Angleterre, where a voice tells the king that he must leave his kingdom with his wife and two sons. A merchant on the ship abducts the queen because of her beauty, throwing a purse to the king, who is left near a stream with the two children. As he puts one into a boat, the other is carried off by a wolf, while the first is carried off by a lion and the purse is snatched by an eagle. Guillaume must go into the service of a bourgeois, and the queen must struggle to put off marriage to a neighboring king. He wanders into a neighboring kingdom, and is captured by two youths, who are recognized as his two sons: they are in the service of another king, having been rescued by merchants. They still carry the cloths they wore as infants for proof. They are then reunited with his wife, and the eagle drops back the sack of gold.[161]

Thus, with this romance, the link between the Hellenistic/Byzantine world of the ancient romance and the Franco/Celtic world of the Western Romance becomes more obvious. At this point in our narrative, however, before we look at the Western romance proper, we might do well to look at the historical circumstances during the period of the lapse in purely fictional literary output. It will be helpful for our purposes to know the extent of interactions between East and West during this period, to understand how transmission of such motifs could have taken place, and to consider whether the two

[161]Hippolyte Delehaye, *Mélanges d'hagiographie grecque et latine*, pp. 222-4. See also the more complete treatment in the chapter entitled "The Birth of the Old French Romance". The pattern of these works is so close to Hellenistic romance that one is tempted to seek a direct source. Although such a source is difficult to substantiate -- the more plausible theory is that oriental folktale elements are molded together into the format of a Hellenistic romance -- it is not impossible that a Hellenistic prototype existed which has now disappeared. After all, beyond the five romances mentioned, all other Hellenistic romances have either disappeared without trace or survived only in minute fragments or illustrations on wall frescoes.(see Hägg, *The Novel in Antiquity*.)

varieties of the twelfth-century romance could have developed jointly, independently, or one based on the other.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHARLEMAGNE AND IRENE: CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE WEST

1. Frankish Leaders and Byzantine Ceremonial

At about the turn of the ninth century, Charlemagne, Emperor of the West, sent his envoys to Constantinople to request the hand of the Byzantine empress Irene in marriage. As ruler of a vast empire encompassing the major Western European nations, Charlemagne could think of himself as a descendent of the Roman Caesars. Nevertheless, Constantinople, with her throne occupied consistently by descendants of the Roman Emperors and with her cultural and artistic glory, was rightly considered the capital of Europe at the time. According to Beckwith, "Constantinople was the capital of the known world. There can be little doubt that the revival of the imperial tradition in the West by Charlemagne was based on some study of the Byzantine imperial system. When Charlemagne made Louis the Pious co-Emperor, he used exactly the same ceremonial employed by the Emperor Michael I for the elevation of his son Theophylact."[162]

Not long before, Clovis had requested of the Byzantine emperor Anastasius that he be made consul -- and, according to Chamberlin, the emperor jokingly consented.[163] Charlemagne himself, equally impressed by Byzantine grandeur, built his palace at

[162]John Beckwith, "Byzantine Influence on Art at the Court of Charlemagne", in Wolfgang Braunfels, ed., *Karolingische Kunst,* (Düsseldorf, 1965), p. 288.

[163]Russell Chamberlin, *Charlemagne*, (London, 1986) p. 11.

Aachen, and its chapel, in imitation of Byzantine edifices at Constantinople and Ravenna, in a style that would be adopted for numerous western Early Romanesque churches. Beckwith notes that Charlemagne showed his interest in Byzantium by questioning his envoys; "Charlemagne's curiosity ranged widely and he appears to have been well-informed as much on the churches and palaces of Constantinople as on the political situation... there."[164] Chamberlin notes that at the time, although Charlemagne would not be emperor for another ten years, "this palace was intended to rival the other palace 1500 miles away at Constantinople... Odo, on the emperor's instructions, looked towards Byzantium, not Rome, for inspiration, for the design of the chapel followed that of the great Byzantine church of San Vitale in Ravenna. It was a deliberate decision but mysterious in its implications... It may have been... a recognition that Constantinople, for all its faults, was a powerhouse of Christian thought."[165] Timmers adds that, according to Einhard, the marble itself was brought from Ravenna and Rome ("*columnas et marmora... Roma et Ravenna devehenda curavit*"); moreover, San Vitale, the model for the Palatine chapel, was in turn modeled after SS. Sergius and Bacchus of Constantinople (526-37 A.D.)[166] He notes: "People in this out of the way corner of Northwest Europe were greatly impressed... because they were suddenly confronted with a work almost entirely Byzantine in character... Imitations were therefore bound to follow." He enumerates the Valkhof in Nijmegen, St. Donatian in Bruges, St.John in Lieges St.

[164]John Beckwith, "Byzantine Influence on Art at the Court of Charlemagne", p. 288.

[165]Russell Chamberlin, *Charlemagne*, pp. 207-8.

[166]Victoria Van Aalst, ed., *Byzantium and the Low Countries in the Tenth Century*, (Hernen, 1985), p. 104.

Lambert at Maizen on Dijle, St. Walbury at Groningen, and the best-preserved imitation, the early Romanesque church of St. Mary at Ottmarsheim, Alsace (consecrated 1049), as examples.[167]

Indeed, with his vast holdings, Charlemagne could consider himself a second "Kaiser" and, with the marriage to Irene--unlike his previous ones, which had no political motivation--he could solve the "Zweikaiserproblem" by uniting all of Christendom. Indeed, as Bershin points out, this was not such a far-fetched scheme since, with the Frankish victory over the Lombards, the two empires actually bordered on one another in Italy.

Charlemagne's dream of a united Christendom, however, would not materialize. His envoys arrived in Constantinople too late, and were present to see Irene deposed. This missed opportunity is symbolic of the "Dark Ages" of the East-West relationship, when East and West grew apart and contact between the two cultures became infrequent.

2. *The "Ecumenical" Centuries*

In the centuries before the fall of Rome, the perception of Greek as the language of learning in the Latin world and the appreciation of Greek art, literature and culture helped cement the bond between the two halves of the Roman Empire making contacts between the two halves strong, despite the division of the ungovernably large empire into the

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[167]Victoria Van Aalst, ed., *Byzantium and the Low Countries in the Tenth Century*, pp. 107-115.

Byzantine East and Roman West and the language barrier of Latin versus Greek. As Aerts notes, most classical Latin authors were indebted to Greek models for their compositions. "Plautus and Terentius borrowed most of their themes from Greek civil drama such as known from Menander; Ennius introduced the hexameter into Latin poetry... The works of Catullus, Virgil, Horace, to mention some highlights of Roman classic poetry, are unthinkable without the Greek examples of Homer and the Lesbian poets, and prose writers like Cicero and Seneca continually show their familiarity with the Greek language and Greek (philosophical) thought. 'Silver Latin' authors such as Martial and Apuleius were equally indebted to Greek authority, both in genre and in presentation."[168] Moreover, according to Berschin, Greek mythology was well-known to the West, and survived through the Middle Ages, particularly through Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: "Orpheus was... an invariably familiar heroic figure in the Middle Ages. Late antique interpretations of myth, already allegorical to a certain degree, were also important in the medieval period."[169]

During the early "ecumenical" period of five hundred years after the birth of the Christian faith, many works, religious and literary, were transmitted to the West in Latin translations, in most cases soon after their appearance in Greek. According to Berschin, "The stock of Greek literature in the Latin West consisted for a long time of those Latin translations which existed at the end of the Gothic epoch in Italy. Not until the ninth century were substantially new translations added, and only in the twelfth and thirteenth

[168]Victoria Van Aalst, *Byzantium and the Low Countries in the Tenth Century*, p. 78.

[169]Walter Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages*, p. 83.

centuries did translations in any number again appear."[170] Religious translations included Saints' Lives, such as the Anthony already noted, and other related works like the "Apocalypse of St. Stephen" by Lucianus translated by Avitus. Berschin notes that such translations were often accompanied by the transfer of relics to the West. Theological works, such as Avianus' translation of John Chrysostom, Rufinus' translation of Origen, and Theodore of Mopsaestia's commentary on the Psalms, also existed.[171] Some theological works were not as well-known, for example Athanasius' works -- except of course the life of Antony and some *"versprengte Stücke"* -- most of Basil the Great's works, as well as those of his brother Gregory of Nyssa.[172] Bershin adds: "One may assume that most of the Greek Apocrypha were rendered into Latin, many of them more than once." These would have included fanciful tales of apostles to the cannibals, as well as more valued works on the lives of the apostles and the birth and death of the Virgin Mary.[173] The latter became a part of the liturgy, and were perhaps responsible for the cult of the Virgin Mary during the Middle Ages. Moreover, the early councils of the church, Nicea (325), Constantinople (381), Ephesus (431), and Chalcedon (451), which established the dogma of the Christian church, all took place on Greek soil;[174]

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[170]Walter Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages*, p. 82.

[171]Ibid., pp. 65-66.

[172]Ibid., p. 83. (Except for one work falsely attributed to another Gregory.)

[173]Ibid., p. 82.

[174]Certainly such nationalistic distinctions would be lost to ecumenical clerics of Late Antiquity; with the growing cultural and linguistic divergence in the early Middle Ages, and the subsequent schism of the church, however, it is inevitable, in hindsight, not to attempt to distinguish Eastern and Western contributions to ecclesiastic tradition even

translations reached the West but in a rather unsystematic fashion, the bishop of Carthage, for example, bringing back a copy of the proceedings from the Nicaea council. Not until the early 6th century would Dionysus Exiguus draft the expert translations of the Acts of the Councils contained in the Codex Canonum and the Codex Decretolium which Pope Hadrian would later send to Charlemagne.[175] Church history (Josephus, Eusebius, etc.) was adequately translated into Latin by Jerome, Rufinus and Cassiodorus, with the glaring exception of Eusebius' life of Constantine. This omission would make possible the erroneous *Actus Silvestri*, and the false assertion in the West that Constantine left Rome out of respect for the emperor Silvester, who became the defacto politico-spiritual head of Rome and would permit the 8th-century forgery of the "Donation of Constantine" document, which granted Rome to the Pope.[176]

It goes without saying that the *Bible* was translated into Latin in various early versions as well as Jerome's revision. Other works translated into Latin during this period included Eustathius' translation of Basil the Great's work on natural science, the *Hexaemeron*, (c.400), and the anonymous *Physiologus*, a work pertaining to symbolism and fantastic, mythical qualities of animals, plants and stones which, from the 5th-century Latin translation, was rendered into most Western vernaculars. According to Berschin, "The bestiaries of the high Middle Ages... had their origins in the *Physiologus*."[177] The

before the actual schism took place.

[175]Walter Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages*, pp. 67-70

[176]Ibid., p. 83.

[177]Ibid., p. 84.

one area of knowledge to survive and continue to be translated during the Dark Ages as an unbroken tradition was medicine: Oribasius was translated in 6th c. Ravenna, and Dioscordes' (1st c.) Περὶ ὕλης ἰατρικῆς was translated in the 6th century and revised in 9th-century Salerno and 13th-century Padua.[178]

As to literature, no translation of heroic poetry existed; Homer was known in the West only through the 1st- century *Ilias Latina* abridgement, and the pseudo eye-witness accounts of Dares and Dictys, which would later be used by Benoît de Sainte-Maure as sources for his voluminous *Roman de Troie*. According to Saintsbury, these works, Dares of 50 pages and Dictys of 100, are far inferior to Benoît's production, which "through his plagiarist Colonna, [was] the original of Boccacio, Chaucer and Shakespeare."[179] Dares, the principal source, attempts to revise Homer as a pseudo-eye-witness account, explains away the miraculous apparitions of gods, and omits the Trojan Horse episode. "It reads... like an excessively uninspired precis of a longer work... in which all of the literary merit has... been omitted."[180]

The story of Alexander the Great, however, was known through Julius Valerius' translation of the fourth-century Pseudo-Callisthenes romance, which would become the source for the Old French *Roman d'Alexandre*. Thus Berschin notes that "For the Middle Ages, Alexander the Great was more important than Hector or Achilles."[181] According

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[178]Walter Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages*, p. 84.

[179]George Saintsbury, *The Flourishing of the Romance and the Rise of Allegory*, (New York, 1897), p. 178.

[180]Ibid., p. 176.

[181]Walter Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages*, p. 84.

to Saintsbury, the Alexander legend... [gave] to some of the most noteworthy parts of medieval literature... an Eastern coloring, perhaps to some extent an Eastern substance."[182]

3. Pseudo-Callisthenes

The Pseudo-Callisthenes romance is a mixture of historical fact and mythical fantasy supposedly recounted by Callisthenes, a friend of Alexander's and eye witness of the events described -- which does not explain the relegation of the most fanciful details of adventure to Alexander's correspondence. The first of three parts begins with the voyage of the Egyptian sorcerer-king Nectanebos to Macedonia, where he convinces Queen Olympias in dreams, through his magical power, that she is to bear the child of the god Ammon, which is to avenge the king one day. On King Philip's return to the palace, he is convinced that this is so when Nectanebos transforms himself into a serpent, the symbol of Ammon, and kisses Olympias. Magic and prophecy abounds, particularly in this first section. Philip sees an egg hatching a small snake which circles around the egg and dies before returning to its shell; this is a prophesy that Alexander, the son, will conquer the world but die soon after. Alexander is born at midday -- another sign that he is to be the conqueror of the world. At twelve he fulfills a prophecy that he would slay Nectanebos after learning the story of his illegitimate birth; at fourteen he tames a

[182]George Saintsbury, *The Flourishing of the Romance and the Rise of Allegory*, p. 153.

wild horse "faster than Pegasus" which he calls Bucephalus. His violent temper sometimes leads to bloodshed and to quarrels with King Philip, but he grows up educated by the best scholars, including Aristotle, and proving himself at the Olympics in chariot racing and in the art of war by conquering two disloyal towns for his father. During his absence, Pausanias attempts to take the queen by wounding the king; Alexander returns just in time, fulfilling the prophecy of revenge, though not soon enough to save Philip's life.

As king, Alexander sets out with a host of 70,000 men for Italy, where the Romans offer him the helmet of Zeus, then on to Northern Africa where he conquers Libya, setting up Paratonion. He dreams of Ammon, and is convinced that he is his son, then moves on to Egypt. All along, images of "descent"--such as encountered in the saints' lives--abound. He passes by the "tomb" of Isis and a place where gravestone cutters work, raises Proteus' fallen gravestone at Pharos, etc. He builds Alexandria, the largest city of the time, including altars, one to an "unknown God", and sewers, an innovation by the architect Yponomos. He visits a temple of Zeus and Hera, and Sarapis, who tells him of his future glory but hesitates to tell him of his death, and he sees birds flying, symbolizing the spread of the citizens of his new city, and non-poisonous snakes which enter the houses as a good omen, unlike an evil snake which he slays. The Egyptians accept Alexander, who promises to conquer their enemies the Persians, and seat him on the throne of Haephestus in the clothing of a pharaoh.

From Egypt he conquers Syria; when Tyros resists, he sets three neighboring villages against it and conquers it, naming the place Tripolis. Arriving at Darius' empire,

he receives insults from this "King of Kings" and descendant of Mithra, who considers him a base robber. Alexander responds that he is the son of the Sungod, but will fight man to man. He wins a brilliant victory, losing 860 men to 120,000 "barbarians", and captures Darius' mother, wife and daughter. Leaving his general Skamandros at the front, he returns to Greece and sweeps through Achaia, Macedonia, Phrygia, Chalkis, and subdues Thebes, arriving at Corinth. From there (now in part II), he proceeds to Plataea, then on to Athens and Lakedaemon (Sparta) both of which he persuades to join his Hellenistic empire. Reinforced, he returns to the front.

On the way, he gets sick as he swims the river Kindros; he is warned by Parmenion that his physician Philippos will try to poison him. He drinks the medicine, then kills Parmenion, the real traitor, after he is cured. He conquers the Medes in Armenia, then returns to the Euphrates, where he destroys the bridge behind his host so that they will fight for their lives. Near Persepolis, several omens occur: a dream of Ammon that Alexander is to seek Darius alone; his offer of goblets to the Persians; Darius' portrait of Xerxes falling off the wall and his mother warning him not to continue the fight. Darius' troops flee despite their great number; Darius himself is murdered by two of his men, who think they will gain Alexander's good will. Darius dies in Alexander's arms, giving him his daughter, Roxane, for bride, and Alexander kills the traitors when they reveal themselves. Alexander treats the Persians as his own subjects; he does not want to be treated as a god. His marriage to Roxane is carried out in Macedonian costume to please his mother. Then, he proceeds to India.

At this point the narrative becomes even more fanciful. Alexander writes a letter

to his mother and to Aristotle, in which he describes his further adventures through a forest peopled by giants -- who are overcome after grave danger -- another group of giants further on, then a demonic stream where people turn black, birds spit fire and fish are cooked in cold spring water. On the other side, he encounters men without heads, all manner of ferocious beasts, and crabs the size of men. Here, he crosses the water to a land of darkness, where the gods bid Alexander turn to the East and fight for India. As he backtracks with his host, they see that all the matter taken from the land of darkness has turned to gold.

In Part III, Alexander arrives in India; he encourages his troops to stay with him, then receives a letter from King Poros insulting the god Dionysos and Greece in general, which he has not bothered to conquer since he considers her worthless before the riches of India. A fierce twenty-day battle ensues, the Indians using trained battle elephants. Alexander finally kills Poros, and makes peace with the Indian host. He is invited by the wise, naked Brahmans to visit them in peace, and he asks these philosophers a series of questions which once more reveal his obsession with his destiny and particularly with death. Another mention of a gravesite visit seals the ominous aura of the passage. On his return, he stops by the kingdom of Semiramis and Queen Kandake, where he mentions the graves encountered in Egypt; he consults the oracle of the god Serapis, and is told that it is better not to know when he is to die. On to the land of the Amazons, he acquires their tribute peacefully, and then receives a letter from Aristotle praising him as a contemporary Odysseus.

On his return to Babylon, he sends his mother another fanciful letter about the

pillars of Hercules, gold, the Amazons, men with dog faces, the city of the sun in Ethiopia, another land of darkness and lamps provided by divinities after sacrifice, and a wise, talking bird. He is told by an oracle that worthiness comes from action; back in Babylon, however, there is an evil omen: a woman gives birth to an infant part human and part beast; the human head dies while the beastly loins continue to live: Alexander is to die, and his followers to quarrel among themselves. Indeed, he is soon poisoned, after participating in a dramatic play; Roxane prevents him from going off to die alone, and he makes a testament dividing his territory among his generals and requesting that statues of himself, Ammon, Herakles and Athena be erected, and that his city be watched over by the Olympian gods -- curiously Zeus, Herakles, Athena, Ares, god of war, Ammon, the Egyptian deity, Helios, the sun, and Tyche, his fortune, whom we might think of as patron goddess of our romances. He dies, and is buried in Egypt according to the oracle of Zeus, thus fulfilling a prophecy and preventing a war between Greeks and Persians over his remains. He had grown up in 15 years, conquered the world in 17, and lived in peace for eight months.[183]

Like other romances we have encountered, the adventure of Alexander is a rite of passage. The trials he encounters in his pursuit of glory and world conquest seem to be pre-ordained by the gods -- as the metaphorical "cup" that would not pass from Christ's lips, Alexander's cup is pre-meditated by God -- as so many prophecies indicate. As in the Saints' Lives of the previous section, his "descent" into danger is marked by death imagery, in gravestones, his preoccupation with death, and the ominous prophesies of his

[183]Adolf Ausfeld, *Der Griechische Alexanderroman*, (Leipzig, 1907).

own doom. Elliott notes the parallel with Saints' Lives, in this curious profusion of death imagery which is required before the ascent to heaven. She studies particularly the scene of the gymnosophist Brahmans, whom he visits before hearing the prophecy of his murder by his own men. She points out that they live "under huts and in caves" and that, Alexander "asked one of them, 'Do you not have graves?' And he replied: 'This place we live in is my grave. I shall lie here in the earth and bury myself in the sleep of those who dwell under the earth. For, in dying, I shall dwell in eternal sleep.'"[184]

Once again, however, this motif of symbolic death is central to a transformation, to a passage from ordinary human life, to exalted deification. When his death comes, Alexander does not perish, but is instead transformed. The glory that he has attained in his lifetime assures for him a place among the gods, and, as he dies, he calls out "take me to yourselves, Herakles and Athena". His passing is marked by beasts and a star which goes out, and at his death Callisthenes remarks that he "went to the gods", thus a personal salvation in apotheosis, and, moreover, in the immortal memory that fame brings: an "Alexander priest" is appointed in Alexandria to preserve his memory, and, according to Pseudo-Callisthenes, his day of death -- as opposed to Christ's day of Resurrection -- was still holy there.

4. Apollonius of Tyre

One final work probably translated during this time and critical for the

[184] Allison Elliott, *Roads to Paradise*, p. 122.

continuation of the romance genre is the *Apollonius of Tyre*, which exists in four Latin translations. As Berschin notes, it is a "typical novel of late Antiquity." Peter Goolden is even more specific, noting not only that the social, political and religious life of the romance, as well as names of persons and places, place it in the Hellenistic world, but also the motifs which form its building blocks, storm and shipwreck, kidnapping by pirates, dreams and apparitions, separations and recognitions, remarkable constancy of affection, chastity despite pressure, and reunion of long-suffering lovers, are precisely the motifs of the Hellenistic romance. Thus, "a comparison... with the Greek romances, notably with Xenophon of Ephesus, ... reveal[s that] both... theme and treatment are... plainly derived from the same tradition."[185]

Goolden insists that the romance could not be a Latin "original" plagiarized from the extant Greek romances because specific words in the text make it read much more like a literal translation than an original work. "Tribunarium", for instance, used for "cloak" is probably a transliteration of "τριβονάριον" in Greek. Thus, "it may be reasonably concluded that the *Historia* is... a Latin version of a previously existing Greek novel,"[186] with a few Latin and particularly Christian features (monotheism, a fisherman sharing his cloak, vision of an angelic messenger). Goolden speculates that the original was composed in the third century along with other Hellenistic romances. Although some vocabulary, particularly the use of "aurei" and "sestertia" for money, suggests a contemporary translation, other features make the fifth century more likely. In any case,

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[185]Peter Goolden, *The Old English Apollonius of Tyre*, (Oxford, 1958), p. ix.

[186]Ibid., p. ix.

reference is made to it by Valerius Fortunatus in the sixth century, and other references follow in the seventh and eighth, proving that the story spread at an early date. A large number of manuscripts survive, as well as several medieval vulgate translations, including two in Old English -- 11th century -- and an Old French metric version, demonstrating the popularity of this Hellenistic romance in the Medieval West.[187] Berschin notes that the earliest surviving texts of the romance are only from the ninth century, and he sees a similarity not to Xenophon but to the recognition motif in the pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions*. Nevertheless, "the cultural milieu (thermal baths, memorial statues, etc.) refers so clearly to antiquity that no doubt of the ancient origin of the novel remains... it is generally accepted that the novel was translated from Greek."[188]

Anne Wilson calls this romance "remarkable for its persistence and its stability,... its duration and vitality, and for its retention of its original character and form."[189] King Antiochus carries on an incestuous relationship with his daughter and asks potential suitors the meaning of a riddle regarding the shameful practice, putting them to death regardless of the answer, hanging their heads on the gate of the palace. Apollonius arrives with the correct solution to the riddle. The king sends him away, and sends Taliardus, a murderer, after him. Apollonius leaves with his wealth, and arrives at Tarsus where he helps the poor and has a statue erected in his honor. A friend, Stranguilio, sends him off to Pentapolis to hide, but his ship is wrecked on the way. Still he arrives

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[187]Peter Goolden, *The Old English Apollonius of Tyre*, pp. x-xii.

[188]Walter Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages*, p. 84.

[189]Anne Wilson, *The Magical Quest*, (Manchester, 1988), p. 25.

with the help of a fisherman, and is befriended due to his prowess by King Archistrates. His skill at playing the lyre makes the king's daughter, Lucina, fall in love with him; Apollonius becomes her tutor, and eventually is chosen -- surprisingly by the daughter -- over her suitors as a husband. Back at Tyre, the couple finds that Antiochus and his daughter are dead, and they can return and inherit the kingdom. On the way, Lucina gives birth to a daughter, and is cast to sea in a chest as she is thought to have died in childbirth. Apollonius leaves his daughter with Stranguilio and his wife, and departs for Egypt vowing not to shave until his daughter is married. Meanwhile, Lucina, who is still alive, is rescued by a physician who adopts her and makes her a Vestal at the temple of Ephesus; the daughter's nurse dies, telling her the story of her father; and the stepmother, Dionysiade, jealous of her, tries to have her killed. She escapes, but is captured by pirates who have her sold in Mitylene. Athenagora, the prince, would like to have her, but allows a procurer to buy her, that he might still be the first to be with her. She persuades him not to violate her virginity and still receives money from him as from others; eventually she is allowed the alternate occupation of playing the lyre, thus preserving her chastity. Apollonius mourns at his return, but manages to find his daughter in Mitylene, and to effectuate the marriage to Athenagora. (This time the woman's consent is not considered.) They return, and tell their story at the Ephesian temple -- first verbally, then in written form; Lucina overhears, and the last recognition takes place. Once back home again, Apollonius seeks revenge on those who had tried to harm his family, and then they live happily for 74 years.[190]

[190]Anne Wilson, *The Magical Quest*, pp. 26-30.

Even at first glance, this summary confirms the thesis that the basic plot of the romance of antiquity -- separation, adventure, recognition, as well as the symbolic burial and resurrection -- are present in the Apollonius. Carried to the West by this precious manuscript and reinforced by this plot in the Saints' Lives and in the Byzantine texts of the 12th century, the Hellenistic model will doubtlessly serve the the 12th-century authors of romance in their rediscovery of the genre.

Indeed, a twelfth-century Old French version, the *Apoloine*, was composed between 1150 and 1160. Although only a brief passage of 52 lines survives, recounting the incident of the riddle about the king's incest, other evidence suggests that the story was known by the authors of the time. Most significantly, in Chrétien de Troyes' *Philomena*, the protagonist is characterized as

> "Plus sot de joie et de deport
> Qu' Apoloines ne que Tristanz."(74-5)[191]

We shall see the significance of Chrétien's knowledge of the elements of Hellenistic romance in a later chapter.

5. *The Dark Ages*

With the collapse of Rome, Greek learning in the West became less and less common. Berschin will attempt to rehabilitate the culture of the Goths, suggesting that "Greek studies in Italy managed to survive the political downfall of the Western Roman

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[191]Jean Frappier, "Les Romans Antiques", in *Grundriss der Romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters,* vol. IV/1 (Heidelberg, 1978), p. 167.

Empire and flourished anew under Theodoric the Great (493-526)."[192] Be that as it may, this last dying gasp of Hellenism in the West would be personified in Boethius, who transmitted Aristotle to the West, but was executed as a traitor, along with his patron Symmachus. Thus, he lost the opportunity to translate Plato, a loss only partially remedied by neo-platonist thought from alternate sources. Still, "Thanks to Boethius' efforts, Greek thought and science, as well as elements of the Greek language,... survived in some small degree in the Latin West."[193] The last famous translators of late antiquity are Cassiodorus, who retired from his position of official correspondent for Gothic kings to his Calabrian estate, where he set up a monastery in which translations were carried out by his humble, anonymous collaborators of Didmys, Origen, John Chrysostom, Clement of Alexandria, Flavius Josephus, Eusebius, etc. It is noted that "L'absence de prologue fait la marque propre des humbles amis de Cassidore."[194] More visible was Dionysus Exiguus, who reputedly "had such a command of Latin as well as Greek that he could render every Greek book which came into his hands into impeccable Latin, and by the same token, he could read forth a Latin book in Greek, so that one believed the words which flowed smoothly and swiftly from his mouth were written in the text."[195] Nevertheless, as Berschin admits, "The mistrust that was beginning to arise between Constantinople and Ravenna, between Catholics and Aryans (ca. 523), was catastrophic

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[192]Walter Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages*, p. 73.

[193]Ibid., p. 76.

[194]Ibid. p.78. (Quoting F. Blatt, "Remarques sur l'histoire des traductions latines," in *Classica et Mediaevalia* 1(1938), 217-42.)

[195]Ibid., p. 79.

for this transmission of Greek ideas into Italy.... Philosophical and secular Hellenism disappeared for a long time from the Latin West after Boethius and Symmachus...".[196]

Still, in the following centuries, Italy was far ahead of the rest of the continent in the preservation of Greek learning. With the Byzantine defeat of the Goths in 553, Rome entered into her "Byzantine" phase, where Byzantine influence made for numerous Greek and Greek-speaking popes, some of whom, like Pelagius I (555-61) and his successor John III, even personally undertook translations of Eastern monastic literature and Saints' Lives. After the Latin pope Gregory the Great (590-604), in fact, the hellenization of Rome grew even more intense, as Greek monasteries sprang up (beginning with St. Anastasius in southern Rome) to accommodate errant monks, particularly those fleeing iconoclasm in Byzantium proper beginning in the next century, or those fleeing the Moslems in Sicily. Greek Popes of this period included Theodore I (642-9), Conon (686-7), Sergius I (687-70), John VI (701-5), John VII(705-7), Sisinnius (708), Constantine I (708-15), and Zacharias (741-52). Numerous Greek Saints' Lives were translated for the first time during this period, and Pope Sergius sent a bilingual All-Saints'Day liturgy and a "missa graeca" to England.[197]

Aerts adds economic and geographic reasons for Italy and Sicily's role as the main link between East and West during this period. Besides religious envoys and a few private individuals who traveled back and forth, the seaports of Venice, Brindisi and Bari, as well as Byzantine Southern Italy and Sicily, carried on trade with Constantinople and

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[196]Walter Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages*, p. 76.

[197]Ibid., pp. 73-91.

the Greek mainland.[198]

6. The West Outside Italy: General Decadence and Monastic Isolation

During this period, Western scholars outside Italy were largely confined to isolated monasteries, and their knowledge of Greek "frozen" in the classical modes of the few texts they possessed. The strong Greek presence manifested in Ancient Gaul by the Greek colony of Massalia (Marseilles), established in the 6th century B.C. and rivaling Athens in quality of education by Augustus' time,[199] and spreading northwards along the Rhone to Arles, Nimes and Saint-Rémy, and, to some extent towards the Germanic frontier of the Rhine,[200] would practically disappear by the sixth century, presenting "l'oubli profond où était tombée la langue grecque dans presque toutes les écoles de Gaule."[201] Eggert cites as an example of the low quality of Greek knowledge the interpretation by Gervais de Tilbery of the word "academy", which he defined as "tristesse du peuple" by association with "axos dimou" and "peripatetic school" as a metaphoric

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[198]Victoria Van Aalst, ed., *Byzantium and the Low Countries in the Tenth Century*, p. 79. It is indicative of the receptiveness of mercantile Italy for foreign cultures that the first sculptures of King Arthur appear here; the archivolt of the cathedral of Modena (ca. 1109) depicts Arthur and his knights attacking a castle; the Otranto cathedral, near Bari, has a mosaic pavement of 'Arturus Rex' with his sceptre, riding a goat (ca. 1165). Loomis considers this proof that Breton minstrels traveled bringing early versions of the legend of Arthur with them, but this is highly speculative and unsubstantiated. (R. S. Loomis, *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages*, (Oxford, 1959), pp. 57-62.)

[199]Eggert, *L'Hellénisme en France*, p. 30.

[200]Ibid., pp. 39-40.

[201]Ibid., p. 51.

quest for truth.(13c)[202]

Thus, besides Italy, which, for the reasons already mentioned, preserved her knowledge of Greek, the other avenues generally associated with the introduction of classical knowledge in the West prove less than fruitful. Spain is one such avenue, credited with being a center for translation due to her contact with the muslim world and indirect transmission of classical learning. Hellenistic romances are not mentioned here, however, and as to Saints' Lives, although a few may have been translated by Paschurus in the 6th century, those included in Valerius of Bierzo's 7th-century collection probably come from Italy, as do the sources for Isidore of Seville's outline of knowledge in the Etymologiae, which, though they rehash classical Greek material, are based on already existing Latin translations.[203]

As to Ireland, the traces of Greek learning are equally disappointing. Bischoff suggests that "Die Annahme der älteren Forschung, in Irland hätten die klassischen, griechischen und lateinischen, Studien in den Jahrhunderten zwischen dem Zusammenbruch des römischen Reiches und der karolingischen Erneuerung eine sichere Zuflucht gefunden, ist heute allgemein aufgegeben;"[204] according to Berschin, no Greek literature existed in Ireland during this period; not much more, in fact, than a few glossaries, words from classical authors, and short liturgical texts from late antiquity were

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[202]Eggert, *L'Hellénisme en France,* p. 54.

[203]Walter Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages*, p. 97.

[204]Bernhard Bischoff, "Das griechische Element in der abendländische Bildung des Mittelalters," in *Mittelalterliche Studien*, vol. 2, p. 247.

available. Although Irish scholars seem to be "remarkably interested in Greek during the seventh and eighth centuries," the knowledge allegedly imparted by the Greek Theodore of Sicily to Adelmelm, Bede's teacher, did not survive in any active sense. Today, we have Greek texts, particularly Apocrypha, surviving in Ireland, but these almost certainly were imported from the continent. Indeed, Berschin considers the Venerable Bede as the first properly Medieval scholar, in the sense that his commentaries are based on handed-down translations: his language is an artificial, non-native Latin, and his work begins the stilted scholastic Latin tradition which survived in the work of pretentious European scholars even to the turn of this century.[205]

In the early Middle Ages, the most common method of acquiring some competence in the Greek language was, on the British Isles as generally in Western Europe north of the Alps, by comparing Greek texts to their late antique Latin translations. Hence, "with a knowledge of Greek acquired in this manner, they could not understand or translate Greek texts with which they were unacquainted. But on the continent, the Scotti peregrini had a scholarly advantage simply because of their greater receptiveness for languages, especially Greek; and in the ninth-century cultural realm of the Carolingians, with its better sources, it was again possible for an Irishman to translate texts into Latin from Greek."[206]

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[205]Alternately, Patrick Wormald describes Bede's ecclesiastical history as "perhaps the most eloquent historical work of the European Middle Ages." Malcolm Godden and Michael Lapidge, *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, (Cambridge, 1991), p. 3.

[206]Walter Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages*, pp. 95-99.

Nevertheless, particularly in the Carolingian empire, isolated pockets of Greek knowledge still survived, particularly in monasteries. According to Berschin, Greek was revered as a mystical language by the Roman church, being, in the words of Isidore of Seville, one of the "tres linguae sacrae" in Pilate's inscription on the Cross.[207] Greek phrases were often incorporated in Western Mass (*Kyrie Eleïson*, etc.) and a number of bilingual Gospels, Acts, Psalters, etc. survive. In fact, Berschin includes Carolingian Europe among the regions which, for historical reasons, did not lose touch with Greek language and civilization: "In some areas and cultural circles of the period its authority was especially great: in Gothic Italy of the sixth century, among the Irish of the early Middle Ages, in the Carolingian ninth and Ottonian tenth centuries, among the Normans of southern Italy..."[208]

Now the problem presented by Carolingian monastic centers is the difficulty in assessing the capacity of monks for translation or original writing in Greek. Very frequently, manuscripts from these monasteries contain bilinguals or texts sprinkled with Greek words. Berschin, however, warns that the bilinguals were usually the work of traveling Irish scholars who fled the Vikings and Danes to the continent, or Greek scholars who are occasionally named as present in all corners of the Western world. Moreover, the use of "ornamental Greek" does not imply in-depth understanding of the language. In general, Greek scholars of this period "could find their way relatively well

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[207]Walter Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages*, p. 19. See also Bernhard Bischoff, "Das Griechische Element in der abendländische Bildung des Mittelalters," pp. 246-274, esp. p. 246.

[208]Berschin, p. 26.

when it was a question of isolated words or a simple sentence, or where the corresponding Latin text was familiar, as in liturgical texts".[209]

Indeed, the presence of a truly brilliant scholar, such as Johannes Scottus at the Carolingian court or his counterpart Sedulius Scottus in Liège, must be considered an "out of place erratum of intellectual history".[210] Concrete evidence of extensive Greek scholarship and translation is evident only in perhaps three monasteries, Laon, inspired by Johannes Scottus, and the closely associated St.Gall and Reichenau, with Irish scholars and a documented visit by St. Methodius.[211] Aerts confirms that "it seems that Greek studies in general remained on a poor level, with more 'Ornamental' than linguistic aspects."[212] Bischoff offers another example of bad "ornamental" Greek in the degeneration of the phrase for "know thyself" *gnothi seauton* to *gnotosolitos*. He notes that this decay continues for the most part even through the twelfth century when, while Sicily and Southern Italy as well as the mercantile ports of the Mediterranean raced to preserve religious and scientific texts. "In that same crucial twelfth century... mummification of this kind became perfect...".[213]

Kaczynski has studied the level of learning at one monastery, St. Gall in Switzerland. She concludes: "a real knowledge of the language was beyond the grasp of all but the

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[209]Walter Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages*, p. 130.

[210]Ibid., p. 142.

[211]Victoria Van Aalst, ed., *Byzantium and the Low Countries in the Tenth Century,* p. 81.

[212]Ibid., p. 82.

[213]Bernhard Bischoff, "Greek Letters in the Latin Middle Ages," p. 216.

determined and fortunate scholars."[214] In fact, the preservation of classical Greek was more for religious than humanistic purposes: "The scholars of the time translated and quoted the works of Dionysius and a small number of other Greek and Christian authors. They also copied bilingual versions of Scripture, assembled Greek prayers to be used in Latin services, prepared glossaries and sketches for grammars, and sometimes ornamented original Latin compositions with Greek titles and quotations."[215] "From the early ninth through the early eleventh centuries, Greek at St. Gall appeared in alphabets and ornamental titles and diagrams, in grammars and glossaries, in Scriptures, in liturgies, and in a series of occasional and miscellaneous works... For the most part, the Greek material transcribed at St. Gall was drawn from Scripture, from early Christian commentaries, or from the school texts of Antiquity."[216] According to Berschin, knowledge of works produced at Reichenau is more sketchy, but, interestingly enough, a "Reichenau Notebook" obviously put together by Irishmen contains a Greek-Latin glossary alongside the Old Irish poem of the white cat Pagur.[217]

Religious translation, bilinguals of gospels and psalms and glossaries are produced elsewhere as well. Berschin notes that, although several Latin-Greek bilingual texts of Virgil's Aeneid have been found, no bilinguals of Homer exist. Translation in the West is almost strictly religious, and the religious Neo-platonism of the Pseudo-Dionysus

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[214]Bernice Kaczynski, *Greek in the Carolingian Age: The St. Gall Manuscripts*, (Cambridge, 1988), p. 2.

[215]Bernice Kaczynski, *Greek in the Caroningian Age,* p. 6.

[216]Ibid., pp. 115-6.

[217]Walter Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages*, p. 153.

Areopagite was revered as the closest thing to classical philosophy: "For the Latin Middle Ages, it was not Homer but Dionysus who was the 'seer' for whose sake it was thought worthwhile to undertake the study of Greek".[218] Nevertheless, Berschin notes that other texts did make their way from Constantinople to the West. We shall see that, in the Ottonian era soon to follow, romances began to be translated again, and numerous volumes made their way to the West from Constantinople. For example, two crates of Greek books were catalogued in the 12th century at the Papal Library: "Not before manuscript research of recent years has the astonishing volume and the high quality (manuscripts of the classics!) of Italo-Greek book production and transmission come to light. Manuscript by manuscript, a 'translatio studii' from Byzantium to the West appears, whose line of textual transmission threads its way directly from the Macedonian Renaissance in tenth-century Constantinople, to the court library of the Norman and Hohenstaufen rulers of southern Italy, to the papal library of 1300...".[219]

7. The Carolingian Court and Pseudo-Dionysius

Besides the isolated monasteries and their sporadic attempts at translation, the Carolingian court itself was a center for Greek culture, as is evident from Carolingian art as well as three ascending generations of Greek scholarship. Besides the already mentioned envy of Byzantine ceremonials, Charlemagne's use of Byzantine art,

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[218]Walter Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages*, p. 45.

[219]Ibid., pp. 36-7.

particularly illuminations in Gundohinus' manuscript, has been described as "an almost textbook example of the way in which cultural influences move from people to people: from Constantinople to Ravenna, from Ravenna to Pavia, thence across the Alps to the rising new kingdom of the Franks,"[220] and Beckwith's study of Byzantine art at Charlemagne's court attests to the presence, towards the end of Charlemagne's reign, of Greeks at his court working on Alcuin's Vulgate revision, and argues for this "new Constantine" not only modeling his palace at Aachen in part on the *sacrum palatium* in Constantinople and the chapel possibly on the *Chrystoriclinion* there -- with the doors of the chapel "cast in a single sheet... technically inconceivable as the work of a northern or Italian artist" (Italian church doors were ordered from Constantinople up to the 11th century) -- but also attributes many Carolingian illuminations to Byzantine artists.[221]

> "The Vienna Gospels and its relatives... appear to be created in a full Hellenistic tradition, executed with superb craftsmanship; they are inconceivable as the work of a northern artist, even after profound and sensitive study of classical models, or of an Italian artist of the late eighth century since even in Rome a dry linearism and schematic forms were the rule. Only an artist trained in the atmosphere of 'perennial hellenism', which we presume to have survived solely at Constantinople, could have produced such works."[222]

Furthermore, "The title page of the Aachen Gospels is wholly Hellenistic in spirit with its foliate scrolls and rosettes reminiscent of Byzantine jewelry dating from the sixth century," and the Lorsch Gospel covers are reminiscent of 6th- century Byzantine ivory

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[220]Russell Chamberlin, *Charlemagne*, p. 148.

[221]John Beckwith, "Byzantine Influence on Art at the Court of Charlemagne," pp. 288-298.

[222]Ibid., pp. 297-8.

carvings.[223] Moreover, some of the pigments flake off, as Byzantine ones do. Finally Beckwith argues that Byzantine craftsmen and artists must have established themselves at the court in Aachen, since its Byzantine character becomes more marked with time. Even the gravestone for Pope Hadrian carved in Aachen has Byzantine-style vine scrolls on the borders.[224]

Reinforcing the idea of the Carolingian Court as a bastion of Greek culture in the West is Berschin's characterization of Lombardy's interest in Greek matters as a function of her being the halfway point between Byzantine Italy and the Carolingian Court. Indeed, Lombardy was quite fascinated with Byzantium, Archis II of Benevuto (758-87) being responsible for the translation of the relics of the Greek soldier/saint Mercurius, as well as a life of the saint, to Lombardy, and the construction of a Santa Sophia church on the model of Justinian's marvel, the Hagia Sophia of Constantinople.[225]

When it comes to letters at Charlemagne's court, however, the picture is not so splendid. According to Berschin, the fascination with Greek at the Frankish court began with a packet of books sent by Pope Paul I (757-67) to Pepin. According to one account, shortly before his death, Charlemagne personally revised the translation of the Gospels with help from Greek and Syrian scholars. In reality, however, Greek knowledge at his court could not have been adequate to allow him to do this. Before Charlemagne considered marrying Irene, another contemplated alliance was for his daughter Hruodtrud,

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[223]John Beckwith, "Byzantine Influence on Art at the Court of Charlemagne", p. 288.

[224]Ibid., pp. 298-9.

[225]Walter Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages*, p. 92.

who was betrothed in 781 to Constantine VI before western involvement in the iconoclastic controversy of Byzantium broke up the engagement. At the time, Charlemagne had asked the Pisan scholar Paulus Diaconus to teach Greek to the daughter's entourage before the projected journey to Constantinople. Paulus promised to teach them some phrases he recalled from his youth but conceded that "If the clerics of this region produce no more Greek than they learn from me, they will be ridiculed as if they were mute statues."[226] As for the great scholar Alcuin who gravitated to Charlemagne's court, Bershin finds no indications in his works that he knew Greek.[227]

The state of Greek letters during this period is best summed up by an anecdote about the iconoclastic controversy, which would not end until 843.[228] A few decades earlier, Charlemagne had heard about the controversy in the Byzantine church over the destruction of ecclesiastical art, and expressed his opinion on the defense of art against the axe-wielding fundamentalists hacking up ornate churches and precious mosaics. His opinion, elaborated by Theodulf, bishop of Orleans, shows a misunderstanding of the Greek terms *proskinisis* and *latreia*, whose distincion, according to Meyerdorff, was clearly articulated by the Second Council of Nicaea.[229] The opinion contained in the *Libri Carolini* confounds the meanings of these terms, "prostration" and "devotion", in a

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[226]Walter Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages*, p. 109.

[227]Ibid., p. 128.

[228]In another strange historical parallel, this was also the year when Charlemagne's empire would be divided through the *Serments de Strasbourg,* which contain the very first Old French text.

[229]Berschin, p. 33.

generic "adoratio" which loses the entire gist of the controversy: whether prostration before an icon is devotion to an idol or merely symbolic of the worship of the Divinity it represents.[230]

The situation improved gradually after the conquest of Lombardy in 774, which created a border between the Frankish kingdom and the Byzantine empire. This geographical proximity made the aforementioned prospective marriage between Charlemagne and Irene a tangible reality, "not... a distant adventure, but rather,... [an attempt] to bring two neighboring kingdoms into closer association."[231] Despite the failure of this overture, and Byzantine reconquest of Venice and Dalmatia under Nicephorus I (802-11), the two empires kept in touch through regular embassies: in 799, 802, annually 811-815.

Indeed, at Nicephorus' initiative, his successors attempted to patch things up with the West after his victory; according to Norwich, the Byzantines were at first disturbed by the "Zweikaiserproblem", since "the Emperor [was] the successor of Augustus and God's Vice-Gerent, the Elect of Christ, Equal to the Apostles," and thus "there could be but a single Emperor on earth, any challenge to whose divinely ordained authority was not only treason but blasphemy." Eventually, however, they came around to the realization that their Greek empire could not possibly influence the political events in the West, or the development of the Latin civilization, and that a second emperor over that part of the world might not be altogether unwelcome, if nothing else, as an authority with

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[230]Victoria Van Aalst, *Byzantium and the Low Countries in the Tenth Century,* p. 81.

[231]Walter Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages*, p. 113.

the capacity of keeping the peace.[232] Indeed, there was a precedent for two rulers in the ungovernably large -- and therefore defunct -- Roman Empire.

Hence, embassies continued with Louis the Pious, 824, 827, 835, 839, as well as under Charles the Bald. According to Berschin, "while the Greek ambassadors made a good impression in the West with their gifts, instruments, and liturgical chants, the Western legates had to tolerate many an insult on the Bosporus...".[233] The 813 mission to Constantinople had to wait eighty days for admittance; by contrast, in Aachen in 812 the Westerners copied the Greek musical instruments brought by the ambassadors, as well as material to play upon them.[234]

Thus, Louis the Pious was able to be a more effective patron of Greek learning than Charlemagne. In 827, Michael II sent him a copy of the four theological treatises of the Pseudo St. Denis Areopagite and his ten letters. Louis commissioned Hilduin, the abbot of Saint Denis in Paris, to write a life of the philosopher, in the belief that he and the patron of the abbey were one and the same. Moreover, he commissioned from him a translation of the work, which was executed, though not very successfully, with the assistance of some Greeks, between 831 and 835. According to Berschin, "To be sure, Hilduin and his assistants were not successful in transposing Dionysius' basic theological principles into Latin in clearly recognizable form."[235]

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[232]John Julius Norwich, *Byzantium: the Apogee*, p. 2.

[233]Walter Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages,* p. 114.

[234]Ibid., p. 115.

[235]Ibid., p. 118.

It would not be until the reign of Louis' successor, Charles the Bald (840-77), that the classic translation of this major author would take place. Still more significant as a patron of Greek study and translation, Charles would have at least fifty works dedicated to him. Among the most significant are the works of Johannes Scottus Eurigena, an Irish scholar who came to his court in 845. Johannes Scottus was commissioned with the new translation of the Pseudo-Dionysius which he carried out between 850 and 860, learning Greek for the purpose and admitting to being "still quite an unskilled beginner in Greek studies."[236] Yet, although his awkward, word-for-word translation lacks the polish of the translations by scholars of Late Antiquity like Dionysius Exiguus, his text as well as his other translations and original commentaries have a considerable impact on religious belief in the Latin West during the subsequent centuries.[237] Paul Rorem summarizes Pseudo-Dionysius' view of the Bible and the Liturgy. They furnished the "symbols and the pattern of procession and return [which] constitute the material and formal unity of the Dionysian writings. Despite the wide variety of themes and the great distance from *The Divine Names*... to *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, a subtle interplay of Neoplatonic metaphysics, biblical exegesis,

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[236]Walter Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages*, p. 119.

[237]This is true, although Professor Thomas Burman (History) of the University of Tennessee believes that Johannes' understanding of Dionysus' Christian Neo-Plationism was so isolated that his works were misunderstood and thus not condemned as heretical until four hundred years later. We would concur, except that there are notable exceptions, such as Anastasius Bibliothecarius, who a) seemed to be impressed with Johannes' understanding -- especially for a "barbarian" -- and b) could point out necessary corrections to his translation.

and liturgical theology... manage to hold his strange corpus together."[238] But perhaps more than these philosophical concepts, more than his "negative theology" with its distancing of God through hierarchies of angels and churchmen, Johannes' translation imparted another interesting concept to the West, in an idealized, Neo-Platonic concept of love. According to Putnam, "In the Dionysian plan, the formal aspect of beauty... in the things at hand, receives scant attention... The divine beauty is essentially efficient, exemplar, and the final causes... for beauty 'calls' creatures, gives them fulfillment, and satisfies desire."[239] Along with this idealization of beauty comes the association of beauty and goodness, which will contribute to the devotion to Woman which will be at the heart of chivalry.

With Johannes Scottus, Greek knowledge during the Carolingian era will reach its apex, and that, as we have seen, as the product of an isolated endeavor. This learning will experience decline before it rises again.

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Before we leave Pseudo-Dionysius, two interesting stops are necessary. One is in Rome, where Anastasius Bibliothecarius (d. 878-9) undertook, among his numerous translations of religious commentaries and historiography, a revision of the Pseudo-

[238]Paul Rorem, *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols Within the Pseudo-Dionysian Synthesis*, (Toronto, 1984), p. 149.

[239]Mother Caroline Canfield Putnam, *Beauty in the Pseudo-Denis,* (Washington D.C., 1960) p. 89.

Dionysius, finding the literal work of the "vir barbarus" Johannes Scottus too difficult to understand: although Johannes "had undertaken to explain Dionysius, [he] had now rendered his works in need of explanation."[240] Because of this revision, it is now impossible to know which portions of the surviving text are actually Johannes', which Anastasius', and which date back to Hilduin. As for Anastasius, his revision inspired in him a greater interest in Eastern mysticism: "His work on Dionysius and above all the impressive personality of Constantine-Cyril of Thessalonica led Anastasius deeper into the early Byzantine theology of the mysteries. He translated the 'Ιστορία 'Εκκλησιαστική attributed to Patriarch Germanus of Constantinople (d. 730) and a Greek summary of the Μυσταγωγία of Maximus the Confessor. He sent both translations to Charles the Bald."[241]

According to Louth, Greek mysticism could only go so far in the West, and, moreover, different aspects of Dionysius' works seem to be appreciated by Easterners and Westerners. In the East, the sacramental emphasis of the work, -- baptism, the Eucharist, oil, also ordination, consecration of monks and funeral services, -- was most emphasized.[242] In the West, however, it was felt that "union with the divine through

[240]Walter Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages*, p. 160.

[241]Ibid., p. 160.

[242]According to Louth, the seven sacraments of baptism, confirmation, eucharist, marriage, ordination, penance, and anointing of the sick were first set in the West in the twelfth century; Greeks up to that time do not have a set number of sacraments -- or "mysteries" as they call them. In the ninth century, Theodore Studite's list follows Pseudo-Dionysus'. Andrew Louth, *Denys the Areopagite*, (Wilton, 1989), pp. 57-58.

complex symbolism obscured the role of Christ,"[243] and therefore the main attraction to Pseudo-Dionysius was not so much the symbolism, as the idea of direct union with God, which the Neo-Platonistic concept of procession and return provided: "Inspired by the Father, each procession of Light spreads itself generously towards us, and, in its power to unify, it stirs us by lifting us up. It returns us back to the... Father who gathers us in."[244] Louth gives the example from Pseudo-Dionysius of a hierarch's sensing procession, which, leaving the sanctuary, proceeds from the furthest point in the nave back to the altar: "Just so, God moves outwards in procession, creating all things and drawing them into communion with himself, and does this without deserting his own unity."[245]

Perhaps we are a bit far afield in attempting later to suggest a direct connection between this text and the Western romances, and that a concept of salvation through a sacred vessel could derive from this source. If we can at least establish, however, an interest in Greek mysticism in the West, particularly near the place of origin of the Arthurian romances, then a Byzantine interpretation becomes less far-fetched. And, indeed, the medieval obsession with Pseudo-Dionysius, which does not begin to cool down until the Reformation begins to question his authenticity, is particularly strong in twelfth-century St. Denis in Paris. According to Berschin, John of Salisbury, bishop of Chartres, commissioned of the shadowy John Sarracenus a new translation of the

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[243]Andrew Louth, *Denys the Areopagite*, p. 73.

[244]Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Celestial Hierarchy*, in *The Complete Works*, (New York, 1987), 120B; 145.

[245]Louth, p. 61.

Areopagitica, this time purged of *graeca*[246], which he dedicated to Odo II of St. Denis (1151-69). Soon afterwards, William of Gap (abbot 1173-86) brought back a number of "libros grecos a Constantinopoli"(1167). He translated along with a namesake, producing among other works a panegyric of Paris as the burial site of St. Dionysius.[247]

Thus we can trace Greek mysticism practically to Chrétien de Troyes' doorstep. Whether he made use of it later in his Grail Romance is an open question, but, as far as the larger question of interest in Greek studies in the West is concerned, it should be clear that, whether at the court of an admiring monarch or an isolated monastery, whether in quality proficient for complex translation and philosophical commentary or mere decoration, interest in Greek remained alive and well in the early Latin Middle Ages, to await the flowering of the following centuries.

[246]That is, transliterated Greek expressions.

[247]Walter Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages*, pp. 241-2.

CHAPTER IX.

OTTO AND THEOPHANO: THE BEGINNING OF A RENAISSANCE

1. Continuity in Italy

As we saw in the previous chapter, up to the ninth century, Byzantine Italy was the most important source of Latin translations for the West. Guglielmo Cavallo, in a study of Byzantine inscriptions in Medieval Italy, underlines this point:

> "dal complesso delle testimonianze scritte emerge un dato: almeno fino all'anno 800ca., l'assunzione di modelli culturali ripresi direttamente da Constantinopoli risulta nell'Italia bizantina limitata a ristrette cerchie e/o a fugaci momenti di diretto o indiretto confronto con la corte di Bisanzio (la Ravenna esarcale di Isacio e arcivescovile di Mauro, la Roma di Giovanni VII, qualche milieu aristocratico);... Sembra, insomma, che la Constantinopoli, grosso modo, tra la fine del VI secolo e quella dell' VIII non avesse gran che da offrire all'Occidente, laddove, invece, centri delle province greco-orientali dovevano essere ancora in grado di trasmettere una cultura all'Italia bizantina da Roma alla Sicilia (e alla Sardegna...). Si trattava di fili sempre più tenui, ma capaci di tenere in vita una continuità, sia pur degradata, della tradizione antica (o 'ellenistica', se vuole) nonostante... Il risveglio di Constantinopoli... trovava un'Italia bizantina in cui certe tipologie di cultura greca di estrazione provinciale si erano ormai saldamente radicate attraverso un processo assai lungo... e saranno queste tipologie che passeranno ad una cultura latina che vorrà darsi nuovi statuti del sapere colmando, attraverso la conoscenza del greco, le sue lacune scientifiche e filosofiche."[248]

In the tenth and eleventh centuries, the long tradition would continue at Amalfi, Salerno and Venice; more significantly for our purposes, knowledge of Hellenistic

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[248]Guilielmo Cavallo, "Le Tipologie della cultura nel reflesso delle testimonianze scritte," in *Bisanzio, Roma e l'Italia nell'alto Medioevo,* (Spoletto, 1988) Vol. 2, pp. 513-16.

literature would be revived, first in Naples and then in Norman Sicily. But for that visit we must wait until our next chapter.

2. Liudprand of Cremona

The situation north of the Alps would improve by the tenth century, although much more through art and culture than through literature. Missions to Constantinople would bring back tales of mechanical wonders, and descriptions of ceremonies such as those recorded by Emperor Michael Porphyrogenitus. It was a period of strength for Byzantium, emperors from Nicephorus Phocas to Basil the Bulgar-slayer regaining lost territory before the setbacks of the next century and the debasement of the coinage. Moreover, Byzantium was still the greatest metropolis of the Middle Ages, attaining a population of 1,000,000 by the twelfth century, whereas Paris could only boast a tenth of this and Venice, which was on her way from Byzantine protectorate to independence, had only 60,000 citizens, and, by the 12th century, a relatively impressive trading colony of 20,000 within the city of Constantinople.[249] It was this revived metropolis that Lieudprand, as ambassador first to an Italian ruler and then the Holy Roman Emperor, who would control the northern part of Italy, would observe and later preserve in unforgettable verbal images. At the court of Constantine Porphyrogenitus, Liudprand witnessed Byzantine court ceremonial at its most exotic, and recorded it in his *Antapodosis*:

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[249]Deno Geanakopoulos, *Greek Scholars in Venice,* (Cambridge, 1962), p. 20.

> "Before the imperial throne stood a bronze, but gilded tree, the limbs of which were full of diverse kinds of birds, also of gilded bronze, which all sang at the same time each according to its specific song. The emperor's throne was, however, so artfully built, that one moment it seemed low, the next higher, and immediately thereafter quite lofty. Lions of enormous size, I do not know whether of metal or wood, but in any case gilded, stood as if guards of the throne, in that they raised a great roar with their movable tongues, their tails beating the floor and their jaws open... the emperor... had been sitting at a moderate height... [then he] was raised almost to the ceiling of the hall and dressed in other clothes than before."[250]

Berschin makes the point that Lieudprand freely employs Greek words in his Latin, of the kind that could only have been obtained through travel, unlike the Biblical Greek used in the monasteries. He quotes a passage from a description of Emperor Romanus' lion hunt, and explains the fascination with lions which he traces from mythology to early Christian images of Christ triumphing over dragons and lions, even to a tenth- century Byzantine royal cloth with life-sized lions used inappropriately as the shroud of two archbishops of Cologne. "Thus the lion, which few Westerners had ever seen, always actively occupied their imagination."[251] We have seen the lion motif in Saints' Lives, and it will emerge again in its proper place.

3. A royal marriage

It was perhaps as much a sign of this new prestige as a fear of consanguinity that

[250]Walter Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages*, p. 175.

[251]Ibid., p. 179.

motivated western monarchs to seek Byzantine princesses as brides for their sons. Nevertheless, according to Van Winter, "up to and including the seventh degree (Roman) and the fourth generation (Canonical) married couples belonging to the upper level of the aristocracy were exposed to a sentence of compulsory divorce".[252] She believes that "Daughters were pre-eminently chosen by... fathers as pawns with which to operate."[253] Hugues Capet, first monarch of that French dynasty, was one to seek such a princess; a more successful applicant was Otto I of the Holy Roman Empire.[254] His envoys, on their second attempt, came away with Princess Theophano. Although of questionable royal lineage, the princess proved worthy of her title, bringing with her the culture of her land, which manifested itself in rather obvious ways: the Ottonian rulers would begin establishing political relationships resembling an extended royal family, after the Byzantine model. Mothers of rulers would be considered legitimate regents for their sons -- as she was for Otto III[255] -- and queens would appear on medals alongside their kings, as a sign of equality, again on the Byzantine model.[256] That this queen, who lived in Germany and traveled every year to Holland, where she died, was instrumental

[252]In Victoria Van Aalst, ed., *Byzantium and the Low Countries*, p. 26.

[253]Alienor, however, in a later century, will use these laws to her advantage.

[254]Essentially Germany and northern Italy.

[255]A practice initiated by Irene, who eventually had her own son killed to preserve her power. (John Julius Norwich, *Byzantium: the Apogee,* p. 6.)

[256]According to Ciggaar, "From this time onwards women are portrayed with their husbands. In Ottonian portraiture, Byzantine influence was very strong, both in style and iconography." In Victoria Van Aalst, ed., *Byzantium and the Low Countries in the Tenth Century*, p. 9.

in re-awakening an interest in Byzantium is beyond doubt; Byzantine influence in political and social institutions as well as art is quite marked. Architecture is likewise affected, not only with arches and domes, but also with Greek inscriptions, which are so in vogue as to appear even in the work of sculptors ignorant of Greek. Much like the practitioners of ornamental Greek of the previous century, they are unable even to spell St. Peter's name correctly.

According to Ciggaar, "More conspicuous than gold in the daily life of the Ottonian rulers after Theophano's arrival in the West, must have been the numerous *objets d'art* which she took with her... [since] tenth-century Byzantium is noted for its artistic life: miniature painting, ivory carving, metalwork, enamelwork, weaving, etc... Remnants of what was probably Theophano's dowry can be seen in German church treasuries, libraries, and museums."[257] She notes that such objects were popular with visitors and served as ambassadorial gifts. More importantly, "Theophano was in all probability literate, and took a number of books with her... which had something to do with religion."[258] Aerts adds that "Theophano's coming to the West... certainly meant a kind of 'hellenisation' in general, particularly in Italy." He points to the improvement in facilities for scholars, with the presence of nine Greek monasteries in tenth-century Italy. According to Berschin, the positive conditions kept Greek monks in Rome during this time, although they no longer had to worry about the iconoclastic conflict or hostilities from

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[257]In Victoria Van Aalst, *Byzantium and the Low Countries in the Tenth Century*, p. 9.

[258]Ibid., p. 9.

Constantinople: "no longer did the exarch hasten from Ravenna to Rome, no longer did a dromone land at Ostia to deport to Constantinople or the Black Sea a monk who had fled to Rome, or even an unobliging pope."[259] Commerce, moreover strengthened the bond; during this period, bronze portals made in Constantinople were shipped to the West to adorn cathedrals. Unfortunately, commerce is not all positive. As Venice grew to be a trading giant during this period, greed inspired the motto "Venice first, Christendom second." This would later be reflected in tragic events.

Berschin notes one final contribution to the opening up of East-West relations during the Ottonian period which would prove significant during the twelfth century: German conquests in Eastern Europe permitted the development of a land route to Constantinople which which would be employed by the knights of the First Crusade on their way to the Holy Land.

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So, as we have seen in the last two sections, some Ancient Greek sources have been present in Latin form in the monasteries of the West since the early Middle Ages, but these have not elicited much enthusiasm from the literate community. Moreover, although contacts with Byzantium become ever more frequent, and Byzantine motifs become evident in Western art, still the two cultures are fairly separate. In these circumstances, as we have seen, French Saints' Lives have a definite nationalistic

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[259]Victoria Van Aalst, *Byzantium and the Low Countries in the Tenth Century*, p. 162.

character, often justifying the presence of certain relics in domestic churches and monasteries or transferring a traditional story from a Roman or Turkish milieu to a Spanish Arabic one. The epic, by definition a nationalizing form, establishes a sort of traditional beginning to the national literature. The Song of Roland, for example, glorifies Charlemagne, the Western monarch, as the defender of Christendom against the Saracens. It is unlikely that the Old French romance, with its international character and mysterious allusions, could have been produced independently in such a closed environment, independent of a transfusion from the Byzantine tradition, hearkening back to the cosmopolitan and culturally diverse Hellenistic world; moreover, the limited access that the cultures of East and West so far afforded each other could not as yet suggest new, creative literary production as a joint venture. It would take a dramatic event in the next century to alter the circumstances, bring the two cultures closer to one another, and initiate the phenomenon of the Medieval Romance.

CHAPTER X.

THE CROSSROADS: NORMAN SICILY

1. Naples and the Alexander Romance

It is sometimes necessary when making broad generalizations, as in the concluding paragraphs of the previous section, to step back and consider the exceptions. We have noted that East and West had grown consistently apart, from the Slavic invasions of the Balkans in the seventh century to the religious, commercial and ethnocentric bickering of the later Middle Ages. We have also already noted some exceptions to the general perception of Western ignorance of Eastern culture. The outstanding exception is Southern Italy and Sicily. With the collapse of the Western Roman Empire in the fifth century, control of the area went by default to the Eastern Empire. Thus, Greco-byzantine culture infused the region, and survived the invasion of Saracens and later Normans to be prevalent in the art of the later Middle Ages and even in the language of our era. According to Berschin, even in the darkest phase, the Saracen conquest of Sicily, Byzantium managed to hang on, wresting in 876 Langobardia (cap. Bari) from the Lombards and Calabria (cap. Reggio) from the Arabs, preserving a Greek influence in Southern Italy. Moreover, an allied victory in Garigliano over the Arabs in 915 granted coastal cities like Naples a semi-independent status such as was enjoyed by Venice.[260]

As it turns out, Naples, replacing Rome as the focal point of Greek culture in the

[260]Walter Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages*, p. 161.

late ninth and early tenth century, would play a significant role in the transmission of Greek literature to the West. Symbolic of this was the marble calendar of S. Giovanni Maggiore, which included both Greek and Latin saints. Here, a number of saints' lives were translated, including the first translation of the subsequently popular Saint Nicholas, and one of Mary of Egypt and the Penitence of Theophilus, the prototype of the contract with the devil story which would later turn into Theophile and Dr. Faustus. In both of these lives, for the first time in the West, the role of the Virgin Mary as intercessor is central.[261] The development of the Cult of the Virgin by the twelfth century in the West will be crucial, according to some theories, in the veneration of Woman of chivalric literature.

Another significant development in Naples was the shift from ecclesiastic to lay patronage of translation. The dukes of Naples, Gregory II (d. 915-6) and John III(928-968/9), both were patrons of translations, the most significant instance being John's support for Archpresbyter Leo's translation of Pseudo-Callistenes' *Alexander Romance*. As ambassador for John and Marinas of Campania(941-65), Leo had traveled to the court of Constantine and Romanus (922-940) in Constantinople, and brought back a number of Greek volumes. After the death of Theodora, John decided to put together a library of Greek books including the Bible, Josephus, Livius and the Pseudo-Dionysus. He also asked Leo to translate one of his imports, a version of the Pseudo-Callisthenes *Alexander*. According to Zacher, this version contained many Byzantine alterations: "manche Einbüsse durch Auslassungen und Aenderungen verfahren, und anderseits doch schon

[261]Walter Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages*, p. 169.

manche Zusätse von Bestandheiten."[262] From this already altered version, Leo created a free Latin adaptation reflecting Western culture. Zacher calls it a "freie lateinische Bearbeitung welches den abendländischen Geist der zehnten Jahrhunderts widerspiegelt."[263] He notes that the old translation by Julius Valerius was by this time already forgotten in the West, so that Leo's version will become, two centuries hence, "Mutter der Meisten abendländischen Bearbeitungen der *Alexanderroman*."[264]

2. The Normans in Sicily

Of course it would be a bit longer before original romances were composed in the West; not only the literary climate, which at present stifled creativity in overbearing religiosity, but also the political climate would have to change, permitting a free flow of ideas from East to West. A large contribution to this end was made by the conquest of Sicily by the Normans, bridging the gap between Greek and French-speaking regions.

With the Norman conquest of Sicily, the revival of Greek culture on the island began in full force, and, after the Moslem centuries, Sicily was again "reintegrated into the intellectual life of the West."[265] Berschin notes that in 1087, Robert Guiscard

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[262]Julius Zacher, *Pseudo-Callisthenes,* p. 108.

[263]Ibid., p. 109.

[264]Ibid.

[265]Walter Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages*, p. 161.

granted the archbishop of Bari a space to build an edifice that would house Saint Nicholas, whose remains were translated from Myra in Asia Minor.[266] Indeed, thanks to the tolerance of the Norman conquerors, Greek learning will be revived in Southern Italy much earlier than elsewhere, where it had died off in the West, and will provide a vital direct link with the Norman territories at the Western end of the continent. Thus, any broad generalization we may have made of frozen knowledge of the classics in the West must be further modified in light of this section.

According to Villars, the Norman conquerors of the region began their immigration to Italy in a gradual manner starting at the end of the eighth century, as part of the great sweep of Norsemen into Europe which resulted in the sacking of many French cities in the ninth century. This fate was shared by Pisa, pillaged according to one chronicle in 860. Even the seaport of Athens, Pireus, bears runic inscriptions testifying to the spread of the men from the North. Nevertheless, Villars notes that "Malgré les invasions nordiques, l'Italie du sud: Pouille, Calabre, Campanie, l'ancienne Grande Grèce, était restée sous l'influence de l'Empire d'Orient. Même quand l'autorité politique de Constantinople faiblissait dans ces regions, les moeurs, la langue, les rites religieux restaient demi-grecs dans toutes les grandes cités: Naples, Reggio, Tarente, Brindisi et Bari."[267]

At first merely mercenaries and adventurers, by the tenth century the Normans settled as defenders of the locals and by the eleventh century they began to play a

[266]Walter Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages*, p. 161.

[267]Jean Béraud Villars, *Les Normands en Méditerranée,* (Paris, 1951),pp. 64-5.

prominent role in the politics of the region, as the Guiscard brothers would begin their conquest, Robert of the Southern peninsula, Roger of Sicily. The study of their history forces a re-evaluation of the Crusades and of their effect on Constantinople. Often willing, from our Western perspective, to give the motives of these devout Christians the benefit of the doubt, we think of the Byzantines as sly and cunning, and rather deserving of their fate for being less than trusting in the knightly champions who came to their aid against the Moslem invader. A consideration of the relation between the Normans and the Byzantines may help us not only with our comprehension of literary relations, but also to look upon the latter with a greater understanding, when we realize that "the Crusade that went astray" was by no means an isolated incident.

3. Normans and Byzantines: Political Relations

Norman power grew gradually in Southern Italy. By the eleventh century, the Normans were defending the local population against the Byzantines, who at this time were considered distant and inconsiderate of their subjects:

> "Dans ces régions riches et anciennement civilisées, les Byzantins apparaissaient comme exploiteurs qui, en compensation d'un pouvoir tyrannique et de lourds impôts, n'apportaient aucun avantage, même pas celui de la securité, car ils étaient incapables de défendre leurs administrés contre les pirates musulmans qui infestaient les côtes. Le pays souffrait d'une misère continuelle et les famines étaient fréquentes. Pour ces diverses raisons, les rapports étaient très mauvais entre les Apuliens et les Grecs, et les révoltes constantes... étaient féroces."[268]

[268]Jean Villars, *Les Normands en Méditerranée*, p. 68.

Seizing this opportunity, the Normans supported the revolt, gaining the approval of the Pope Benedict VIII for their endeavor in 1016 but suffering a serious setback with the Byzantine victory of 1018 at Cannes, their leader Osmond being killed.

This was the situation when Robert Guiscard came to power in 1057 and his brother Roger arrived from Normandy. Two years later, at the Council of Melfi, Pope Nicholas II recognized Norman fiefs; the following decade would be marked by back and forth fighting, resulting in the capture first of Brindisi, then eventually Lecce and Bari after a three-year siege, in 1071. Thus Robert conquered the southern part of the mainland; Sicily, traditionally more Greek than Roman, was left to his brother, who in 1061 marched in to fill the power vacuum left by the apathetic and disorderly Muslims who had conquered the island in the ninth century.[269]

The completion of these conquests left Robert free to ponder other prospects. According to Villars, "Ses propres états étaient à demi byzantins: beaucoup de ses sujets se disaient grecs, parlaient grec, vivaient sous la loi grecque; il finit par se considérer lui-même comme un souverain grec. Bien plus, par un curieux cheminement de l'esprit, il arriva à se tenir pour le successeur du Basileus, qu'il imitait dans son cérémonial, ses institutions et même son costume. S'asseoir sur le trône de Constantinople, après avoir été un rêve confus, devint un désir impérieux, puis une idée fixe pour l'aventurier."[270] His pretext came in 1078 when Emperor Michael Ducas, after the betrothal of his son to Robert's daughter, was dethroned by Nicephorus Botaniates, who placed the daughter in

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[269]Jean Villars, *Les Normands en Méditerranée,* p. 122.

[270]Ibid., p. 138.

a convent. Robert set a precedent for several similar future plots by feigning the goal of restoring Michael to his throne -- only that his Michael was actually an impostor, a monk named Rector. The campaign began with Marc Bohemond, Robert's son, manoeuvering into Illyria, and Robert himself reaching the mainland through Corfu. Meanwhile, Byzantine power fell into the hands of the young Alexius Comnenus, "une sorte de Bonaparte" according to Villars. The confrontation took place on October 18, 1081 in Durazzo, now Albania. Alexius had made concessions to the Turks, but they and the Serbs proved unreliable allies. The German allies proved no match for the Normans, and eventually the Emperor was forced to retreat as his troops were being defeated. A cross of Constantine was captured by the Normans during the engagement.[271]

Despite his victory, Robert soon had to abandon his campaign in order to fight the Germans in Italy. The result was the sacking of Rome in 1084, marking the definitive passing of the Rome of the Caesars. Meanwhile Bohemond scored some definite victories in Northern Greece, but, finding himself overextended, he eventually had to retreat, leaving his host to defeat. Robert would return with a vengeance after the Roman campaign, turning his host loose on the island of Corfu to kill 13,000 Greeks and Venetians and taking 25,000 prisoners. He was to launch the next campaign onto the mainland from Cephalonia, but he caught malaria and died there in 1085, his brother Roger by his side.[272]

It is no wonder, then, that the Greeks should be suspicious of Bohemond's

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[271]Jean Villars, *Les Normands en Méditerranée*, pp. 144-9.

[272]Ibid., pp. 164-5.

intentions during the first Crusade, suspicions which, as we have noted, proved true. On his return, Bohemond insisted that the Greeks were to blame for the ultimate failure of the Crusaders; "pour que réussisse la reconquête des Lieux Saints, il fallait avant tout détruire l'Etat qui barrait la route entre l'Europe et l'Asie. La croisade contre les Musulmans devait commencer par une croisade contre Byzance."[273] Such was his message as he sought support in England, Normandy and France; and according to Villars, he found strong support: "tout en poursuivant ses animosités et ses ambitions personnelles, il s'appuyait sur un très fort mouvement d'opinion européen, était soutenu par le Pape Pascal II et approuvé par toute la chrétienté latine. Quinze ans de traîtrises et de déceptions mutuelles avaient appris aux Occidentaux qu'ils n'avaient rien de commun avec les Byzantins, même pas la religion, et que ceux-ci étaient, seraient toujours un obstacle et non une aide pour la croisade."[274] These sentiments will be activated a century later, during the Fourth Crusade. Meanwhile, the bitter Bohemond dies in Italy in 1111. Robert's kingdom passes on to the less ambitious Roger "Borsa", and eventually is united to the Sicilian kingdom.

Roger, perhaps more civilized than his brother, was by 1091 complete master of his island and Malta. As we shall see, his exemplary religious tolerance and openness to local tradition will set the stage for a cultural and artistic renaissance on the island. Surprisingly for a Norman, he would die in his bed, after another ten years of a relatively peaceful reign. Rule of the kingdom would pass on to Queen Adelaide, then to his son

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[273]Jean Villars, *Les Normands en Méditerranée*, pp. 176-7.

[274]Ibid., pp. 178-9.

Roger II (1112), remembered for his tolerance, encouraging orthodox monasticism and settling disputes between rival ethnic factions. The crown passed subsequently to Guillaume I (1127), who, after a two-year war unified the Norman possessions of Italy, subsequently pursuing Robert's ambitions against Byzantium under a similar pretext.[275] "A son tour, il était ébloui par le titre prestigeux du Basileus, par la gloire de sa capitale, hanté par le désir de s'asseoir sur le trône de Byzance. Dans un bizarre état d'esprit fait de haine et d'envie, il détestait les Grecs et les copiait. Palerme fut toujours une sous-marque de Constantinople. Il semblait aux Hauteville qu'ils n'auraient pas accompli leur destin tant qu'ils ne seraient pas maîtres de la métropole et de l'empire d'Orient."[276]

This time, the war was carried to the Normans' front yard, as, while Guillaume was in Rome, the Byzantines supported an insurgency in Southern Italy. After all seemed lost, Guillaume reconquered the land, first marching on Brindisi and then destroying several towns including Bari. An 1161 assassination left Sicily in the hands of regents, and eventually to Guillaume II, "le bon", under whose rule Sicily enjoyed her most peaceful and harmonious period. A thirty-year peace treaty with Manuel Comnenus was in effect, and an attempt was made to patch things up, with Manuel offering the hand of his daughter to Guillaume. In 1172 the situation deteriorated: Manuel found a more suitable suitor for Marie in Friedrich Barbarossa's son, leaving Guillaume with a hatred which began to materialize at the death of Manuel. According to Villars, "En Europe latine, l'idée de renverser l'Empire grec était dans l'air... Tous ceux qui étaient en

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[275]Jean Villars, *Les Normands en Méditerranée*, p. 228.

[276]Ibid., pp. 239-40.

contact avec Byzance savaient la fragilité de cet état déjà à demi croulant."[277] It is significant to register this opinion decades before the sacking of Constantinople; thus, the debacle is no longer an accident of history. The surprise it must have caused can thus only be analogous to a Pearl Harbor: it wasn't a matter of whether but when the enemy would strike!

The peace was irrevocably broken when Andronicus assassinated the regent and Michael's successor; vehemently anti-western, Andronicus burned the Latin quarters of Constantinople and assassinated Latins, including the legate, whose head was tied to a dog's tail. The Sicilians responded with the same pretense as Robert Guiscard, finding a pseudo-Alexis as pretender to the Byzantine throne and attacking with their fleet Durazzo and Thessalonica, thus breaking the peace established in 1156. Thessalonica was sacked, but the Byzantines regrouped after Andronicus was replaced by Isaac Angelus. They scored a great victory, killing 10,000 Normans, and imprisoning 4,000 including leaders. At Guillaume II's death in 1189, the kingdom fell to Roger II's grandson Tancred de Lecce, who sought an alliance with Byzantium due to his quarrel with Richard the Lionhearted's crusaders, who stormed through his kingdom sacking Messina in 1190. Villars states concerning the Crusaders, "voyageurs novices et pillards impatients," that, once they crossed their frontiers, they had the tendency "à voir dans toute population étrangère des sarrasins à pourfendre et à rançonner, en Autriche, en Hongroie, dans l'Empire grec, beaucoup de pieuses expéditions avaient tout ravagé sur leur route."[278]

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[277]Jean Villars, *Les Normands en Méditerranée*, p. 304.

[278]Ibid., p. 344.

Tancred hoped to seal the alliance with Byzantium through the marriage of his son, and made a series of alliances with the other major powers. His kingdom would not remain secure, however, for the son died after his wedding, and Tancred died soon afterwards of a malady in 1194.

Through treaties, the kingdom now passed to the Germans, and Frederick II, who, unlike some of his Norman predecessors, took a broader view of things: "Sa vaste culture était internationale... pénétré[e] des influences arabes ou méditerannéennes... [Il] aspirait à réunir l'empire d'Orient à celui d'Occident et se voyait devenu un autre Justinien."[279] This reunification would remain a dream; he would die in 1250 in the midst of civil and religious wars, excommunicated by the Pope. His son, Manfred, would reign for fifteen years before being killed in a battle with Charles d'Anjou, bringing to an end the crossroads that was the Sicilian Kingdom.[280] Nevertheless, Frederick's culture and universalist outlook helped preserve and encourage Greek learning and even the composition of original literature at his court, a practice which survived at least into his son's reign.

4. Cultural life

As significant as the political events may be for our understanding of the jealousy and militancy of the West towards Byzantium, equally important is our understanding of

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[279]Jean Villars, *Les Normands en Méditerranée*, p. 341.

[280]Ibid.

the cultural life of Norman Sicily, which should give us an important clue to the source of the similarities we will perceive in Eastern and Western literature of the period. Villars' characterization of the rulers of Sicily as Frenchmen conscious of their own culture but open to influences from abroad is very important in understanding the kind of interaction that took place at these crossroads of Eastern and Western culture.

According to Villars, "ce royaume exotique et composite était gouverné par des hommes qui étaient pénétrés de culture française et parlaient le français.... [Leur] domination... en Sicile fut pour l'Europe du Nord une porte ouverte vers les vieux centres de la Mediterranée orientale... C'est l'honneur des Normands d'avoir apprécié la beauté et la richesse de ce que leur apportaient les vaincus et d'avoir conservé autour d'eux une intelligensia grecque, africaine et levantine... A [la] cour [de Roger II] se rencontraient et échangeaient leurs vues des savants, des artistes, des écrivains, des médecins et des voyageurs de toutes races et de toutes religions. Dans cette grande Grèce où les restes d'un passé prestigieux étaient partout visibles entre les fûts encore dressés des colonnes antiques, où les esprits étaient restés agiles, habiles à la spéculation, férus de connaissance, se reconstitua aisément un milieu d'art et de science."[281] The mark of Greece was everywhere in such a milieu, from the language spoken at the chancellery to inscriptions on coins, from the mosaics in churches to the books that were read. According to Villars, "De tels contacts apportaient à l'Europe du Nord, rude et élémentaire mais pleine de vigueur et de sensibilité, un incalculable enrichissement, et c'est au choc de deux courants si différents que l'on peut en partie attribuer la floraison

[281]Jean Villars, *Les Normands en Méditerranée*, pp. 256-258.

de l'époque gothique."[282] We must take the time, before we move on to the West, to understand the extent of Greek influence in the art and literature of this important halfway point.

5. Mosaics

First the literary activity of the period is analogously reflected in the art. At churches of the period, like Monte Cassino, Bagnara, Forzo d'Argo, Itala, the Palatine Chapel, etc, a strong Byzantine influence is noticeable. In fact, mosaics of Sicilian rulers in Byzantine costume closely resemble those of the Byzantine emperors whom they envied. Villars describes Roger II according to the mosaic at the Martorana church in Palermo as "un ascète flexible, brun à barbe de Christ, revêtu d'une robe byzantine."[283] Moreover, after a close study, Demus concludes that "the largest ensemble of Sicilian mosaics, the decoration of Monreale Cathedral, is the work of a Greek workshop of the end of the twelfth century and not as hitherto thought, the product of a local Sicilian school... The mosaics of Monreale will have to be regarded as an outstanding monument of the last phase of Middle Byzantine Church Decoration, as a monument which shows that Byzantine Art was not in decline towards the end of the twelfth century, but vigorous enough to produce a novel mode of composition."[284]

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[282]Jean Villars, *Les Normands en Méditerranée,* p. 258.

[283]Ibid., p. 260.

[284]Otto Demus, *The Mosaics of Norman Sicily,* (New York, 1950), p. xix.

Demus goes on to study each church in turn. His conclusion about Cefalù, the best-preserved and perhaps earliest church, is fascinating. The edifice is a Romanesque basilica with transept, arabic arches and classical capitals which seems to reflect the eclecticism of Sicilian art. Begun by Roger II in the 1120s, it was allegedly chartered between 1131 and 1148, but seems to have been left incomplete, worked on in 1166 by William II, completed under a different plan between 1180 and 1200, repaired in 1263, consecrated in 1267, and restored three times since, once with harmful results.[285] As to the mosaics in this church, they are apparently the model for the Palatine Chapel, Martorana and Monreale. The *pantokrator* of the central apse is the most detailed and imposing part of the design; Demus speculates that this part was actually completed by Greek masters by 1148 under Roger II. The rest, including the mosaics of the lower presbytery and an upper tier of Patriarchs and Prophets, as well as bilingual inscriptions in a "somewhat barbaric idiom", were probably made by local pupils of the Byzantine masters beginning in the 1150s.[286] If this is true, then we have tangible evidence of the direct transmission of Byzantine art in Sicily from Greeks to Westerners.

6. Literary Activity: Hellenistic Romances in the West

Similar production takes place with regard to literature. Wilson notes that, although Cassiodorus' translations are considered the "last flicker of scholarship in ancient

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[285]Otto Demus, *The Mosaics of Norman Sicily*, p. 9.

[286]Ibid., pp. 15-18.

Italy"[287] and two subsequent centuries of Arab rule made native literary production difficult, by the tenth century new translations spring up again. Manuscript P.M.#397 of Grottaferrata contains Aesop's *Fables*, a life of Aesop in the form of a novel, the fables of Barbius, the Greek bestiary, *Physiologus*, and the *Philogelos*, as well as the Greco-Arabic *Kalila and Dimna*. Books on rhetoric and medicine are also translated at this period.[288]

By the twelfth century, the love of books in Southern Italy is such that over a hundred Greek books from this area are preserved: many are biblical, theological and liturgical, but also some secular, including legal texts, Hippocrates, Galen, the pseudo-Cyril lexicon, Libanus, Achilles Tatius, Theophylact Simocatta, and the only surviving copy of the letters of Aristaentus (2nd sophistic period).[289] Manuel Comnenus made a gift of a number of books to William I, and it is noted that a certain citizen of Constantinople complained that so many books were being bought up by foreigners that their price was unaffordable for the domestic population.

This is not to say that copying and translating was limited to the South of Italy; James of Venice (1130-70) translated works of Aristotle; Burgundio of Pisa (1110-93) patristic philosophy; Henricus Aristippus translated Plato, and Anon translated Ptolemy. And the activity continues to the next century. Moerbeke, the Latin archbishop of Corinth translated Proclus, Parmenides, etc. Back in Sicily, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the

[287]N.G. Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium*, (London, 1983), pp. 210-211.

[288]Ibid., p. 211.

[289]Ibid., p. 212. (The later period of Hellenistic romance.)

Batrachomachia, philosophical works, and Lycophon's *Alexandra* and Hesiod's *Works and Days*, both with Tzetzes' commentary, were produced. Later, Greek scholars of the diaspora like Chrysoloras and Bessarion would continue the tradition.[290] By that time we are already in the Humanistic age, when, according to Geanakopulos, "Petrarch failed to learn Greek, but Boccaccio was somewhat more successful."[291] At this time, literary translations of the authors of antiquity in large quantities replaced the bulk of religious translations of the previous centuries, providing an abundance of poetic, dramatic and historical works, many retranslated to provide a pleasant-sounding Latin text -- a Homer that reads like Virgil. Rediscovery of Homer and Plutarch, retranslation of Aristotle, the mass of literary activity provided books for collectors: Niccolo Niccoli was the first to have over a hundred; Cardinal Bessarion, a Greek *émigré*, the first to reach the five-hundred mark; and the Vatican in the 15th century was the first to reach the 1000 Greek volumes mark.[292]

But this is all in the future. In the twelfth century, Sicily was a particularly important center for such literary activity, due to the bulk of the material, the political circumstances promoting tolerance and easy transmission, and the bilingual population. We know, moreover, that in twelfth- century Sicily there was a strong interest in the Hellenistic novel due to several commentaries. The Archbishop of Rosano, for example, justifies his taste in ancient novels on moral grounds: they demonstrate the cardinal

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[290]N.G. Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium*, pp. 213-217.

[291]Deno Geanakopoulos, *Greek Scholars in Venice*, p. 24.

[292]Walter Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages*, p. 273.

virtues, the punishment for wickedness, and even implicit mystical numerology: the values of the Greek letters in Chariclea's name, for example, add up to 777: "seven hundred showing its holy and perfect character, seven tens adorning the tripartite soul with four virtues, the single seven referring to the body to which the mind is attached, keeping in the middle of the soul the five senses and matter and form, from which it is created."[293]

Once we pinpoint this interest in the Byzantine romance here, at the halfway point between Byzantium and Greece, we can understand how the ancient romance, transmitted to the West through Saints' Lives, is reconverted to romance following the example of Byzantium. Along with the Crusades, this was also a point of entry into the Byzantine world of the Arthurian romances, which would spread to Greece, but not until the following century: "Western influence penetrated Greece in the thirteenth century. This was the time when a knowledge of the Arthurian legends was brought into Greece, which became a feudal country ruled by western knights from their castles."[294]

7. The German Period

The brief period of German hegemony over Sicily was equally fruitful for the preservation and transmission of Greek materials. Concerned with original literary

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[293]N.G. Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium,* p. 217.

[294]Ibid., p. 226.

production in Sicily, Wellas notes that it was "bis... 12. Jh... fast schließlich kirchlich-religios...": hymnographic and hagiographic. At this time, however, a significant change occurs: "gegen Ende des 12. Jhs, unter der Herrschaft Friedrichs II, eine 'Dichterschule' ihre Blüte erlebte, deren Vertreter ihre Müse sich auch von weltlichen Süjets inspirieren ließen."[295]

This school flourished in the first half of the thirteenth century at the monastic school of San Nicola di Casole near Otranto, its major figures being Nicola di Casole, Giovanni and Nicola di Otranto, and Grigori di Gallipoli. The religious output of this group was reminiscent of Byzantine hymnography, but they also had an interest in Classical mythological subject matter, following Homer, Euripides, Lykophron, Musaios, etc. Wellas characterizes this philological exercise, however, as "steif und unplastisch", with "immer streng eingehaltene byzantinische Zwölfsilber."[296] Nevertheless, it is significant as the first example of symbiosis of religious and profane art, since "Einbettung dieser Dichter in die byzantinische literarische Tradition, die sich in fast keiner Phase ihrer Geschichte von der antiken Komponente vollig entfremdet hatte."[297] Wellas compares these authors, despite their "gewissen Monotonie", to Walter von der Vogelweide and Reinmar von Zweter, in that they also wrote on both classical and modern subjects, mythology being "Evasion der Wirklichkeit... durch die poetische Verarbeitung antiker mythologischen Stoffe. [Und] Parallel dazu schufen sie dann

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[295]Michael Wellas, *Griechisches aus dem Umkreis Kaiser Friedrichs II*, (Munich, 1983), p. 75.

[296]Ibid., pp. 76-77.

[297]Ibid., pp. 77-78.

Gedichte, die ihren politischen Standpunkt zum Ausdruck brachten und Politische Tagesereignisse kommentierten."[298] Most importantly for us, the works of these authors show the use of the living Greek language at the period of composition of the first Western romances right at the doorstep of the Westerners:

> "in der ersten Hälfte des 13. Jhs, in einer Zeit vermeintlichen Niedergangs des italienischen Hellenismus, die griechische Hochsprache in Unteritalien lebendig war und als Dichtungssprache benutzt werden konnte... Es zeigt sich hier noch einmal die Zwitterstellung des italogriechischen geistigen Bereichs zwischen Ost und West."[299]

Finally, Wellas considers the relationship between the German rulers and their Greek subjects: although Frederick in his international politics tries to bring Sicily closer to the West -- as witnessed by the Gothic style of his architecture --, he is still very friendly to the Greek population, which ceases to regard Constantinople as the center of its world after 1204. Moreover, it is speculated that, although he seemed to prefer Latin translations, the king was familiar with Greek, having acquired spoken Greek probably as a child and formal Greek at court. A collection of books discovered at the papal library at Reggio includes thirty-three Greek volumes probably looted later by the French from the remains of his personal library. Under his son, important translations of Aristotle were carried out, with Michael Scottus coming from the other great translation center in Toledo,[300] but, according to Wilson, "overall, the picture is disappointing, particularly in view of the brilliance of the Sicilian court

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[298]Michael Wellas, *Griechisches aus dem Umkreis Kaiser Friedrichs II,* pp. 142-3.

[299]Ibid., pp. 77, 144.

[300]Ibid., pp. 145-8.

during the reign of Frederick II of Hohenstaufen (d.1250)."[301]

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From the preceding discussion we can establish with certainty that Western Europe, through the Norman presence in Sicily, was well aware of the commonplaces of romance by the twelfth century, with certainty through translations of the Hellenistic authors, and, quite possibly, of the Byzantine ones as well. This, compounded by the "opening" of Byzantium by the Crusades and the unbroken tradition of the Saints' Lives, indicates that by the twelfth century, much more than in previous centuries, there was a sort of common market of ideas which permitted the West to borrow Eastern concepts in the development of its proper romance. Perhaps symbolic of the role of Norman Sicily is the thirteenth-century Old French romance of Guillaume de Palerne, where the protagonist, an Apuleian prince, is the rival of a prince of Constantinople, in a French work which also exists in Middle English.[302]

If we dispute Sicily's mediating role, later developments will have to be attributed to a convoluted series of influences which is much less plausible. In treating the Paleologian romance of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, for example, Roderick Beaton notes the similarity between certain Greek romances, their immediate French ancestors, and the hellenistic romance. Because the plotlines originate in the West and

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[301]N.G. Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium,* p. 227.

[302]Henning Krauss, ed., *Europäisches Hochmittelalter,* (Wiesbaden, 1981), p. 302.

eventually arrive in the East, however, and sometimes the Western version takes place in Saracen Spain, Beaton traces a complex pathway from the Hellenistic romance to the *Arabian Nights*, thence to a hypothetical transmission to Spain, to the Old French romance, and eventually back to Greece. A recognition of the twelfth-century common market of ideas greatly simplifies such an equation.[303]

[303]There are other problems with such an "Arab" thesis; for one, as we have noted, translations in Spain were more philosophical than literary; for another, most French romances originate in the North, and have very little connection to Southern France or Spain. Still, even if for the sake of inclusiveness we accept the Arab route as an alternate pathway of Hellenistic influence, Norman Sicily should still be considered the primary source of such influence due to her unbroken linguistic tradition. Moreover, whatever Arabic tales may have existed in Spain could just as easily have existed at the Norman court, where the descendants of Saracen invaders, as much as the Greeks, were permitted to preserve their culture and language.

CHAPTER XI.

FLOIRE ET BLANCHEFLOR: THE BIRTH OF THE OLD FRENCH ROMANCE

1. The Crusades, Interaction, and Courtly Love

We have already noted a gradual awakening in the West of interest in Greek and Byzantine matters beginning in the tenth century, as well as the intensive activity at the crossroads of Sicily. Geanakopoulos notes that, at this time, ambassadors, merchants, adventurers and occasional scholars traveled back and forth. It would require the onset of a major political event of the Middle Ages, however, to produce that massive contact between East and West that would permanently change the literary picture.

At the end of the eleventh century, Pope Urban II's call for a Crusade against the Turks who controlled the Holy Land brought large numbers of crusading Westerners, among them troubadours from Provence, face to face with the Byzantines. The confrontation will be chronicled by Anna Comnena, daughter of the Byzantine emperor Alexius: "the emperor... had long been aware of their dream of Empire... the Keltic [Western] counts are brazen-faced, violent men, money-grubbers and where their personal desires are concerned immoderate".[304] According to Geanakopoulos "large groups of people from the two civilizations confronted each other in the East for the first time en masse... It may readily be conceded that whatever cultural influences existed in this period

[304]Anna Comnena, *The Alexiad*, (Harmondsworth, 1969), pp. 449-450.

flowed from East to West."[305] Kohler notes obvious influence of the Crusades on certain Western texts: "Kreuzlied, Kreuzzugsepik, die französische Historiographie des XIII und XIV Jhs, das Werk von Dichtern wie Jaufré Rudel, Raimbaut de Vaqueiras, Conon de Béthune, Rutebeuf...".[306]

Now according to Villars, the *jongleurs* of the court of Roger in Norman Sicily brought with them French songs, particularly the *gestes de Charlemagne*, which became as well-known in Sicily as in France or England. Thus, "la Sicile franco-normande joua un rôle majeur dans le grand rayonnement de la France au Levant, dans l'Empire byzantin et dans toute la Méditerrannée Sarrasine au cours des XIIe et XIIIe siècles."[307] Loomis adds that tales of Arthur were brought to the East by Crusaders as early as 1170,[308] but this is difficult to substantiate, particularly since the first Greek version of an Arthurian story, as we have noted, does not come until the next century. Most importantly, it will be noted that the *chansons de geste* lacked the refinement and courtly love quality of later romances, and that, in the exchange of literary ideas, such a concept could not have originated, as Loomis thinks, as a matter of French taste superimposed on Celtic motifs, but only as a borrowing from Byzantine romance.

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[305]Deno Geanakopoulos, *Interaction of the 'Sibling' Byzantine and Western Cultures in the Middle Ages and the Italian Renaissance*, (New Haven, 1976), pp. 5, 9.

[306]*Grundriss des Romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters*, (Heidelberg, 1970), vol. 1, p. 399. Giorgos Andriomenos of the University of Birmingham points out the similarity between the beggar poetry of Rutebeuf and the "ptochoprodromeika" attributed to Prodromos.

[307]Jean Villars, *Les Normands en Méditerranée,* pp. 256-7.

[308]R.S. Loomis, *The Development of Arthurian Romance,* (New York, 1970), p. 13.

Indeed, before Arthurian romance ever reached Byzantium, the romances of Byzantium must have been heard by Westerners, since this is the only explanation for certain striking similarities: the God of Love, the mysterious castle, etc. Most significantly, the troubadours definitely could have encountered a sort of idealization of women in Greek texts, written mostly before their Old French counterparts. Heliodorus certainly describes love in very ideal terms "at the moment when they set eyes on one another, the young pair fell in love, as if the soul recognized its kin at the very first encounter and sped to meet that which was worthily its own." Moreover, he states that "perfect female beauty is more lovely than the fairest of men," and he seems to put his heroine Chariclea on a pedestal: "Her hair... cascaded over her back and shoulders, but on her crown and temples... it grew in rosebud curls golden as the sun... her eyes shone brighter than any torch". Since his romance seems to be a tribute to the Sun God, Chariclea's association with him is on the order of deification. Moreover, Digenis' service to his lady is no less chivalrous than the behavior of later heroes of French romances. Ker says of this romance: "The story is full of incidents such as are common in the French romances--the winning of the lady Eudocia, the fight with the dragon, even the description of the season of May and the beauties of the garden, like many a vergier in the French books."[309] Before his death, Digenis cries out to his wife:

"...'O bitter parting from my dearest,
From joy and from all of the world's delights!
Sit opposite and feast your eyes on me,
For you won't see your lover any more...
Do you remember dear, light of my eyes,

[309]W.P. Ker, *The Dark Ages*, (New York, 1904), p. 345.

How I was bold enough alone to seize you,
Not fearing your parents nor the multitude?
The army that attempted to divide us,
O my beloved, on the darkening plain,
And how, refusing to turn back, I slew them?
And how I cast your brothers from their horses,
Wholly unhurt, obeying your injunction?
Remember how I chose to take just you,
But left your dowry to your father for life?
It was entirely for love of you, dear;
I did all this to win you utterly.
Do you remember, dear, Blattolivadi,
And how the dragon found you at the spring,
And how the shameless brute tried to seduce you?
And you cried out, and called on me to help,
And how I heard, and quickly came to the spring,
Where, thinking nothing of this apparition,
I cut the heads off that were flaming fire?
I dared to do these things for love of you;
I would have died rather than have you sigh.
Remember too the lion in that meadow
Which, while I was asleep, my scented light,
Sprang to tear you apart. You gave a cry,
And when I heard, I leaped toward him quickly,
And killing him, delivered you unhurt,
My dearest, from his claws, but filled with terror?
Then, when I would divert you with my lute,
The outlaws, Ioannakes' men, guided
By your singing, came shamelessly towards us,
And daringly attempted to divide us.
You know, my soul, what happened to them then:
Without sleep, I delivered them to death.
These things I did because of love for you,
Preferring not the world or even life.
Do you remember dear, the wondrous outlaws...
And how they met me unarmed at the river,
All three of them on horses fully armed?
You know how eagerly they tried to kill me?
When they observed you coming out before me?
But you cried out to me, and helped by saying,
'Be a man, dear, so they don't separate us.'
How, strengthened by this I routed them,
Beat them full force, and wounded with my mace,
And then, abashed by words, granted them life?

For you, my darling, so that I might win you.
How I unhorsed Maximo, killed those with her,
And then, persuaded by your words, ran back,
And slew her secretly, without your knowledge?
And many other things I did for love
Of you, my soul, to win you utterly...."[310]

Thus, in a manner typical of romance, the hero recapitulates his adventures, but stresses the chivalrous motivation for his deeds, although, unlike later chivalrous stereotypes, the object of his affection in this case eventually becomes his wife.[311] Having made this speech, Digenis worries over his mate, who will now be left alone after his passing, and urges her to take another husband so as not to be alone.

Thus, at any rate, by the time of Alienor's arrival in Constantinople in the middle of the twelfth century, the stage was already set for the birth of the Old French romance: the Byzantines, preserving the storytelling techniques of the Saints' Lives and the narration of *Digenis*, possibly intrigued by the art of crusading troubadours, had already begun to reach back to their Hellenistic roots and revive the ancient form of the romance. Jeffreys notes furthermore that "the atmosphere that Eleanor would have encountered at the Byzantine imperial court would have made her well aware of the petty imperial pretentions, the inadequate ceremonial and the small cultural aspirations of the French court over which she presided."[312] She has already formed the hypothesis "that an

[310]Dennison Hull, ed., *Digenis Akritas,* (Athens, Ohio, 1972), 8:65-122.

[311]We shall see that Chrétien de Troyes' characters, particularly Erec, Cligès and Yvain, are similar in to Digenis in this respect, and either diverge from the stereotype of later romances, or, if truly the first Arthurian romances, do not yet show that development.

[312]E.M. Jeffreys, *Popular Literature in Late Byzantium*, (London, 1983), p. 474.

awareness of the Greek examples was all that was needed to crystallize experimentation in French."[313] She notes the patronage of the Byzantine authors by the Empress Irene as an Eastern counterpart to Alienor in the West: "In view of the popular dissemination in later centuries of motifs from these novels, Irene's patronage marks a decisive stage in the development of secular (and less learned) literature in Byzantium...". She concludes that "by 1147, when Eleanor of Aquitaine paused at Constantinople, the novel had re-emerged in Byzantium as a genre."[314]

2. The Romans d'Aventure

It should come as no surprise, therefore, that, as the second generation of Crusaders returned home, the creation of their first romances should take forms already familiar to the Hellenistic and Byzantine world: "romans d'aventure" and "romans d'antiquité". We have already seen the first of these groups represented by the majority of Hellenistic and Byzantine romances, and transmitted to the West in late antiquity by the Apollonius story. The latter is represented by the Pseudo-Callisthenes *Alexander* likewise transmitted to the West. As we consider the twelfth-century French texts, therefore, we must recall a three-pronged source of inspiration: Byzantium as the late-antique source of romance prototypes, Byzantium as originator of the Saint's Life, which will bridge the gap of the "Dark Ages", and Byzantium as inspiration for exotic description and possible spark for

[313]E.M. Jeffreys, *Popular Literature in Late Byzantium*, p. 482.

[314]Ibid., p. 481.

the reawakening of a sleeping genre.

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The first of the French Romans d'Aventure is the *Floire et Blanchefleur* of 1150-1160, a romance in 3000 octosyllabic verses which will later be popular in its Byzantine adaptation. The romance is the story of Blanchefleur, a Christian princess imprisoned by the Muslims in Spain. Floire, the Muslim prince, travels to the Levant to rescue her, after his father sells her to the Emir of Babylon. He sneaks into the castle but is found; both he and Blanchefleur are to be burned, but the Emir spares them and they return to reign after Floire's father dies and Floire is baptized. A longer version adds to the adventures of separation, reunion, magic, etc.

According to Krauss, this romance "gehört... stilistisch durchaus in die Nähe der antiken Romane, seine Quelle... dürfte jedoch orientalisch sein, byzantinisch vermittelt... Das Modell des hellenistisch-byzantinisch Romans ist unverkennbar, obgleich verkurtzt."[315] We partly agree with this observation, but will recall that the Arabs tended to preserve and comment on the works of antiquity, as when, in the early 9th century, Al-Mamun obtained a collection of classical manuscripts from the Emperor in Constantinople to be translated into Arabic -- and subsequently into Latin. Moreover, the Hellenistic romance was not strictly Greek in provenance, but came in part from the Eastern provinces of the Byzantine Empire. Thus, an oriental model is not necessary, if

[315]Henning Krauss, ed., *Europäisches Hochmittelalter*, p. 252.

we note that the skeleton of the story precisely fits our prototype: salvation in love -- though now Christianized -- after a trial involving travel and a near death experience. (The Christian element is present not only in the conversion of Floire, but also in the transmission of the motif of a magical ring which breaks when its owner is in trouble. According to Delehaye, Floire and Blanchefleur own this miraculous ring thanks to the legends of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary and Saint Honoratus of Butangais, both of whom were said to possess such a marvel.)[316]

A similar mixture of pagan and christianized motifs appears in the Old French version of the third-century *Apollonius of Tyre*, which, according to Krauss, shows the influence of saints' lives while preserving the narrative technique of its Byzantine precursors. Moreover, its pretense of recounting historical events is significant in its inspiration to the *Romans d'Antiquité*, as well as the Arthurian romances and all subsequent "historical" fiction: "Das mag zum Teil an dem Prestige der antikisierenden Roman liegen."[317] Other romances in this vein are the *Parthenopeus de Blois* (1182-5) and Aimon de Varennes' *Florimont* (1188).

3. Guillaume d'Angleterre and Eracle

In these romances, the influence of Byzantium is unquestionable; the challenge will be to carry over our study into the more popular romances, particularly the Arthurian

[316]Hippolyte Delehaye, *The Legends of the Saints*, p. 29.

[317]Henning Krauss, *Europäisches Hochmittelalter*, p. 254.

cycle which subsequent chapters will study. An important connection in this respect is the court of Marie de Champagne, where the young Chrétien de Troyes and Gautier d'Arras worked. Krauss suggests the two may have been rivals; in any case, their beginnings at least are similar. Assuming, as we believe, that the *Guillaume d'Angleterre* belongs to Chrétien, Krauss notes that "Zwei Uberlieferungsrange laufen... zusammen; der hellenistisch-byzantinische Roman und die hagiographische Legende."[318] He also points out the distinct borrowing from the eighth-century Life of St. Eustache.

A number of elements in the Guillaume suggest that it is indeed the work of Chrétien; first, the prologue emphasizes charity, humility and church attendance, all Christian values also emphasized in *Perceval*. The interlacing structure of the plot, which is alluded to by several critics, is also a similar feature. In one bizarre twist of the plot, the king threatens to wound himself in the thigh, which was the condition of the Grail King. The British setting of the story makes allusion to imported Byzantine items, particularly the gold "bezants"[319] in the pouch and the fineries the merchants trade: "fabrics fit for an emperor, cloth of gold, quilts, sables, plumes and ermine furs, silver backgammon boards and golden chess boards," items which later also figure in the *Perceval*:

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[318]Henning Krauss, *Europäisches Hochmittelalter*, p. 254. As the subsequent study shows, motifs, ideas and stylistic characteristics from the *Guillaume* apparently recur in other works by Chrétien.

[319]English translated quotations from Chrétien's *Guillaume d'Angleterre* are from the latest translation by David Staines.

"Car moult en i avoit de biax,
Souef amblans, fors et isniaus."(2045-6)

The merchandise moreover, is supposedly the best "here to Aleppo," just as in Perceval a tower is the best "here to Beirut" both place names familiar to Crusaders. Perhaps another common feature is the mixture of psychology, strong characterization, nobility and brutality, seriousness and comic relief. Finally, the attribution of the story to a source, in this case Robert le Cointe, seems to be a Chrétien trademark.

The story begins with a description of good King William, who, despite his virtues, is asked by a voice from God to abandon his throne and wander the earth. At the suggestion of his chaplain, he waits until he hears the voice three times before setting out, and his faithful wife, also hearing the voice, refuses to let him go without her. Wandering through the forest, the couple reach a cave on the seashore, where the queen gives birth to two sons. Despite Chrétien's cautious remarks about her virtue, the queen threatens to eat one of the babies from hunger and is persuaded to control herself only by the king's offer to sacrifice the flesh of his own thigh.

Begging at the port, the king is insulted and beaten; his wife is carried away by the merchants, only one of whom shows mercy by throwing a purse full of bezants which gets caught on a tree limb. The king puts one of his children in a boat, and the other is carried away by a wolf. As he unsuccessfully chases after it, an eagle carries the money away; meanwhile the two children, one in the boat and the other retrieved from the wolf, are adopted by two merchants and named Lorin and Marin.

Not finding his children at the port and left with nothing, the king imitates Job and

Eustache. He blames himself for his covetousness, and accepts the trials of God; he accepts the idea that "He who humbles himself shall be exalted," as Christ had said that "He who shall be first must be last." He begs passage on another ship to Galloway, where he becomes a servant and eventually a steward. Meanwhile the merchants who had abducted the queen fight over her until she is taken away by an old knight curiously compared to Roland, and given refuge in his house. When the knight's wife dies, he offers her his property for her hand; the queen, already having demonstrated her ambiguous character, first refuses, then reconsiders thinking that, if she puts off sexual activity for a year, the knight will probably die and she will inherit his desirable property. Thus, a chaste marriage is concluded.[320]

Meanwhile the boys, now grown up, refuse to accept the jobs their foster fathers offer them; insulted by being given the cloths in which they had been found, they set off on their own -- but with a squire and horses -- and go hunting in a forest, where they are apprehended, after a good meal and a night's rest, and taken to the king of Caithness, who retains them as courtiers and knights. The king is generously sent off by his master to trade merchandise and keep the profits; so great is his success that he is entrusted with the man's sons and his finest wares for a trip to England, where he is recognized by his nephew, who is still faithful to his memory, and where he finds a horn that once belonged to him and a repentant young man who shamefacedly relates the pillaging of the palace after the king's departure.

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[320]This motif is reminiscent of Xenophon of Ephesus' *Habrocomes and Anteia*, where Anteia convinces Perilaos to give her a thirty-day reprieve before their wedding is celebrated.

The king departs, confident in his nephew's trustworthiness, and is blown off course, miraculously landing in the queen's territory, where the custom is for the ruler to take from each arriving ship an item of merchandise of his choice. The knight has since died and the queen is the ruler; she recognizes the horn that the king has recovered, and asks for his ring, the sole memento of her. At her court, they recognize each other, and spend the next day hunting and catching up.[321] The couple's reunion is accentuated by "miracles": the eagle drops the purse of gold bezants; the king, following a stag, catches up to it in the neighboring land of a king who has been waging war against the queen because he wants to marry her. His knights who stop the king turn out to be his sons; the recognition, through the cloths, erases the queen's ill-will at these most evil men who had killed many of her men and harassed her constantly: errors of ignorance. Finally, the king of Caithness is given the adjoining land, and the family, after feasting, returns to England where all the good characters in the story are rewarded for their efforts.

After so many striking similarities one might conclude that this tale, so much like the Hellenistic romance in its structure of separation, adventure, constancy, shipwreck and recognition, might have been built upon the Eustache legend independently of Byzantine influence. The elements already alluded to, as well as Chrétien's definite interest in Byzantium as exhibited in his later romances -- which we shall presently come to -- and

[321]For those concerned with definitions of "novel" and "romance", this work fits most closely into the definition of "novel" as currently applied by Beaton and Hägg to the Hellenistic romance, since the plot is artificially compact and all the adventures resolve in a long recognition scene. Frye's distinctions, depending on the humanity or superhumanity of the character, are, for our purposes, not as applicable. (See Northrop Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism*, (Princeton, 1957).)

the strong influence of Byzantium in the court of Champagne and the Crusading fervor of the Court of Flanders, point to a wider Byzantine context for this romance. It will be recalled that Chrétien had knowledge of the Apollonius romance; Jean Frappier also believes that he knew the at least the decasyllabic *Alexandre*, since his term *graal* also appears there.[322] Furthermore, U.T. Holmes notes: "We have good reason to suspect that Chrétien de Troyes, in the heart of Champagne, was interested in Byzantine material. The *Cligès* shows much evidence of this -- and we consider it of some significance that the *Guillaume d'Angleterre* is placed so close to the *Cligès* in B.N. MS 375. (*The Floire et Blanceflor* [in the manuscript] is also Byzantine in inspiration, and perhaps also the *Roman de Blancandin.*)"[323] He bases his assertion on historical connections: "On the advice of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, the future count of Champagne (Henry I [of Troyes] waited to be knighted by Emperor Manuel Comnenos of Byzantium, in 1147. Emperor Manuel was a sworn enemy of the Norman kings of Sicily, which made him an ally of the German Emperor Conrad III, and of Frederick Barbarossa. In turn, these German rulers were in close association with Troyes and Champagne, as well as with Bar-le-Duc... In 1170, Count Henry... tried to reconcile Frederick Barbarossa and Louis VII of France... We must not forget either that [his] mother... was a German lady."[324] In this context, Germany, in good relations with Byzantium since the days of Theophano, plays a

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[322]Jean Frappier, in *Grundriss der Romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters*, vol. 4, p. 296.

[323]U.T. Holmes, *Chrétien de Troyes*, (New York, 1970), p. 125.

[324]Ibid., p. 84.

mediating role to the court of Champagne, before taking an even more central role as inheritor of the partly Greek kingdom of Sicily at the turn of the century. Thus, the historical context corroborates our thesis that this story, with its Hellenistic and hagiographic elements, and a few touches inspired by commerce and the Crusades, provides the important link between the Hellenistic-style romance in France and the Arthurian romance.

One definite Byzantine connection at the court of Champagne is the work of the already-mentioned Gautier d'Arras. Of certain attribution are his *Eracle* and *Ille et Galeron.* The first mingles Byzantine history and hagiography in a narrative that confounds events in the biographies of the Emperor Theodosius (5c), Saint Heraclius, and the Emperor Heraclius (7c). The second has "hellenistisch-hagiographische Struktur und Liebesgeschichte, das Schema Christlichen Dulderlebens und das Wunschbild ritterlischen Arrivierens synthetisiert."[325] If we consider the *Eracle* a bit more closely, we note in Gauthier's works the precise coincidence of elements we identify as being at the origins of the Old French romance.

The fictional narrative begins as a Saint's Life, and includes the love interest of romance, the background of the Crusades, and pseudo-historical events of the Byzantine court and the emperor Heraclius. In Rome, a pious senator, Miraidos, and his wife Cassine wish for a child; it is promised by an angel on the condition that it be conceived on a rug, Miraidos wearing a mantle. After the birth, an angel brings a letter from God, which the child, Eracle, reads when he turns six. He is blessed with three gifts:

[325]Henning Krauss, *Europäisches Hochmittelalter*, p. 255.

discernment of precious stones, horses and women. Now Miraidos dies soon afterwards, and Cassine gives away all their property for the good of his soul; left with nothing, she decides to sell her son for a hundred bezants -- a strange, even grotesque comportment for a mother, perhaps mirrored in Chretien's *Guillaume*, where the mother threatens cannibalism.

Fortunately, Eracle is purchased for the emperor by his seneschal; he quickly proves his abilities in purchasing a magical stone and a winning race horse, so that the emperor asks him to select his new wife. Eracle rejects all the girls offered and recommends instead a humble orphan from Rome. She proves compatible for seven years, but is subsequently dealt a blow by the emperor who, against Eracle's advice, shuts her up in a tower before leaving for war. Insulted, the empress responds by meeting secretly a harpist she had met at a banquet; Eracle effectuates a divorce once the emperor is sufficiently calmed down to acknowledge his fault in the matter.

In the end, Eracle, becoming emperor, duels successfully against the son of an evil Persian king who had killed the emperor and stolen the True Cross to Persia. After Eracle's victory, the Cross is recovered, and he brings it to Jerusalem where he is permitted by God to replace it in its sanctuary only after showing sufficient humility.[326]

As we already noted, we see in this work the outline of a Saint's Life -- the miraculous birth, travel, supernatural powers, and, in the end, ordeal and triumph in the recovery of the Relic; mainstream romance takes over in the middle portion, particularly in a secret meeting arranged by an elderly neighbor; the Byzantine court is the backdrop

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[326]Gauthier d'Arras, *Eracle,* (Paris, 1976), pp. xii-xvii.

of most of the action -- except for the scenes in Rome -- and the Crusading is represented by the fighting with the Persians, pseudo-historical in that the recovery of the True Cross was attributed to Heraclius' campaign though not effectively documented. According to de Lage, "Il n'est pas surprenant qu'en temps de prédication et de préparation de Croisade, un écrivain chrétien traite le thème de la Croix et glorifie un Croisé avant la lettre."[327] In noting these affinities, we find it peculiar that this same editor of the Gauthier text should find that "il n'y a... aucune affinité entre [Gauthier et Chrétien]."[328] Indeed, the presence of Gauthier's works at the court of Champagne reinforces our thesis that the greatest composer of Arthurian romance, Chrétien de Troyes, was familiar with the motifs and outlines of the Romances of Antiquity, and that this familiarity came through the composite route that we suggest: hagiography, translation, travel and Crusade. This fact is crucial if our subsequent chapters on the Arthurian romance are to be regarded as more than idle speculation.

As a footnote to our discussion of Gauthier, we might note that the original legend of the discovery of the True Cross, here represented by Heraclius' alleged recovery, also bears the marks of typical hagiography. According to Drijvers, Eusebius, the contemporary church historian to the Empress Helena, makes reference to her pilgrimage to Jerusalem -- perhaps the first trip of its kind -- but fails to mention the discovery of the True Cross. The subsequent legend might therefore be attributed to Constantine's dream of the cross in the sky which led him to military victory, and the subsequent

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[327]Gauthier d'Arras, *Eracle,* p. xvi.

[328]Ibid.

veneration of this symbol, "initially an object identified with disgrace."[329] In any case, the oral legend became written by the end of the fourth century, in Greek versions by Sozomen, Socrates and Theodoret, and Latin by Rufinus, also mentioned by Ambrose, Paulinus of Nola, and Sulpicius Severus.

Although some versions mingle the legend with that of Protonike or of Judas Cyriacus -- the latter giving vent to anti-semitic expression later apparently shared by Chrétien -- the general legend describes Helen's trip, and her discovery of the Cross under a mound at the foundation of a temple of Venus. (These may represent a variant of the travel and false burial motifs). Afterwards, although she finds a sign bearing the tell-tale inscription, she wants to be sure of which of the three crosses she has discovered is actually Christ's. A healing miracle gives her the answer she suspects, and the Relic is split, a part sent to Constantine and a part remaining in a temple on the sight.[330] Thus, Helena's story provides a good early example of the mingling of hagiography and Byzantine pseudo-history, imported and re-constituted in the West as in Gauthier's works. Furthermore, this legend is a prototype of the quest for a symbol of salvation motif, which we shall consider in our Grail chapter.

4. Chastity: from Hellenism to the Romans d'Antiquité

As for the *Romans d'Antiquité*, *Alexandre, Thèbes, Eneas, and Troie*, we ought

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[329]Jan Willem Drijvers, *Helena Augusta*, (Leiden, 1992), p. 81.

[330]Ibid., pp. 79-80.

not forget that *romans d'antiquité* existed in Byzantium as well: a *Trojan War* adaptation, the *Life of Alexander*, the *Tale of Belisarius*, and the *Achilleid*. Frappier calls the court of Aliénor "véritable école d'imitation de l'antiquité... La matière antique a connu son plus grand essor à l'ouest de la France, c'est-à-dire dans le royaume anglo-angevin au temps de Henri II Plantagenet et d'Aliénor d'Aquitaine. L'auteur de *Thèbes* était selon toute vraisemblance un clerc poitevin; *Eneas, Piramus et Thisbe* appartiennent a la Normandie, tout comme le *Brut* de Wace; Benoît de Sainte-Maure était né en Touraine."[331] He notes also that Chrétien de Troyes experimented with classical models before turning to his *matière de Bretagne,* and that Marie de France made a similar transition because of the abundance of authors who "s'étaient entremis de traire de latin en romanz."[332]

Although the *Romans d'Antiquité* are derived from the already available Latin translations or sometimes Latin sources, their creation concurrently with the Byzantine romances cannot be mere coincidence. Elliott notes that "The definitive action of the romance is the quest", and its appeal is in "the glimpses it affords of exotic lands."[333] Byzantium was certainly the exotic land par excellence for the Franks of the 12th century, as it was for the knights of the Fourth Crusade: "Then did the pilgrims gaze upon the greatness of the city, and the palaces, and the rich abbeys, and the rich minsters and the great wonders that were in the city; and they marveled very greatly thereat, and much did

[331]Jean Frappier, *Histoire, mythes et symbole*, (Geneva, 1976), p. 23.

[332]Ibid., p. 22.

[333]Allison Elliott, *Roads to Paradise*, p. 120.

they marvel at the minster of Saint Sophia and the riches that were there."[334] Moreover, the idealization of women and the chivalric ideal are certainly closer to the values of Hellenistic romances, where chastity is praised and heroes undergo trials for their loved ones, and to Byzantium in general, where emperors treated their empresses as equals -- as Justinian did his beloved Theodora, despite her common origins -- than to the austere Western literature of the time, such as the bloody *Song of Roland*, which lacks refined qualities. Furthermore, many later works of the courtly genre display a mingling of marriage and chastity,[335] perhaps a confused holdover from the Hellenic romance where the couple, although overwhelmed by all-consuming passion, does not consummate its relationship until the end. Indeed, on this point, the measured chastity of Hellenistic and 12th-century Byzantine romances is much more in line with chivalric ideals than any other possible source of inspiration.

On this subject, the displacement brought about by the christianization of romances renders this theme unrecognizable in the Saints' Lives of the previous centuries. According to Elliott, "At the conclusion of the quest, the pattern in which the heroine joyfully surrenders her much-defended virginity (or chastity...) to the hero on the final page of the story is replaced by a renunciation of sexual activity for a life of virtuous chastity and penance."[336] Indeed, in the Saint's Life, chastity is transformed into "a

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[334]Robert de Clari, *Chronicle,* in Edward Stone, *Three Old French Chronicles of the Crusades*, p. 228.

[335]Jessie Weston, *From Ritual to Romance*, pp. 29-30.

[336]Allison Elliott, *Roads to Paradise,* p. 126.

form of spiritual martyrdom."[337] One of the motifs of the Saint's Life, for example, is that of the repentant prostitute (Pelagia, Mary of Egypt, Maria Meretrix, and Thais).[338] This is undoubtedly inspired by the often forced abduction of Hellenistic heroines to brothels; Abraham's arrival at a brothel to rescue his niece Maria is certainly reminiscent of a scene in Hellenistic romance, such as the *Apollonius of Tyre,* and doubtlessly written with the same goal of entertaining an audience. According to Elliott, "in spite of the pious outburst to remind the audience that the hero is only acting and that his deeds are in diametrical opposition to his inclinations and his normal life, the traditional themes of romance are fully operative here: the sexually provocative situation, the danger of the hero's fall, and, because of the hero's disguise, even the threat of incest."[339] The hermit Abraham is quite adept at playing the old lecher:

> "While they were sitting and drinking, that marvelous man began to toy with her. She got up, threw her arms around his neck, and began to caress him with kisses... Later, after they dined, the girl continued inviting him to bed so that they should enter the bedroom. And he responded, "Very well, let us go." When he went inside, he saw the bed piled high with covers, and he quickly sat down on it."[340]

Whatever prurient interest such scenes might hold, however, sexuality was clearly frowned upon by the Church, whose teaching the lives tried to reflect: after the loss of her virginity to a sinful monk, Maria exclaims: "I feel myself dead because of this deed. Where shall I hide myself, into what hole can I throw myself? I do not dare to regard

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[337]Allison Elliott, *Roads to Paradise*, p. 144.

[338]Ibid., p. 127.

[339]Ibid., p. 129.

[340]Ibid., p. 127.

heaven since I know that I am dead to God and men. It is better that I go away into some other country where there is no one who can recognize me, especially since I am already dead."[341] In the brothel scene, after Maria nearly removes her uncle's shoes and bars the door, the recognition takes place, leading to ten years of isolation as remorseful penance.[342] One must look to Byzantium, therefore, for the kind of treatment of love that is found in the Old French romances.

5. Provence: Bogomil inspiration and courtly love lyrics

Recent studies, moreover, have tended to discredit the claim to originality made for the courtly love lyrics of the troubadours.[343] Some cite Arabic sources (the Arabs, of course, in their way adapted Ancient Greek knowledge), some the Cult of the Virgin -- which may in fact have been influenced in a round about way by the Isis cult of the Ancient Romances. All these currents have their antecedents in the Hellenistic world of late antiquity; thus, whatever theory seems more valid, all seem to point either to indirect influence by the Ancient romances or, quite possibly to a renewed awareness of their content through their Byzantine counterparts.[344]

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[341]Allison Elliott, *Roads to Paradise,* p. 127.

[342]Ibid., pp. 129-130.

[343]See Peter Dronke, *The Medieval Poet and His World*, (Rome, 1984).

[344]Robert Briffault notes that the troubadour poets traveled extensively and were subject to a variety of influences; for example, Peire Vidal "lived for a considerable period in Cyprus, where he married a Greek," and even draws comparisons between "model[s] of authentic Grecian antiquity" and troubadour poetry, only to subsequently

One fascinating theory as to the inspiration for troubadour lyric was offered by Denis de Rougemont in the classic treatise *Love in the Western World.* De Rougemont suggests that this inspiration may be found in the religion of the Albigensians, or Cathars, established in Provence at that period. His attribution of their beliefs to Gnosticism and Manicheanism requires rather a stretch of the imagination, unless their belief in denial of the physical self were attributable to the "anti-bodily dualism"[345] of extreme asceticism. More recent evidence, however, plugs up the "missing link", making the theory all the more credible, by offering another Byzantine connection for the origin of the Cathars and, in turn, for the inspiration of troubadour poetry.

The connection provided by Eliade in his history of comparative religion begins

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reject what he terms "the pathetic misconceptions of pseudo-classicism" and credit the rise of the genre to contact with the Arab world! "Medieval Europe, sunk in the night of five centuries of barbarism, the darkness of which we have difficulty in piercing, was suddenly recalled to life. She owed, in that critical hour, everything to the world of Islam. She owed almost nothing to Rome... [and] to suppose that the new poetry which made itself heard on the edge of Andalusian gardens constituted a singular exception is, properly considered, an eccentricity which it would take far more cogent reasons to color then the unsupported guesses offered in explanation of the origin of that poetry." (Robert Briffault, *The Troubadours,* (Bloomington, 1965), pp. 3-23.) In light of our discussion, to suggest that Medieval Europe was asleep until awakened by the Muslim civilization is at best an overstatement. As we have noted, as part of an overall larger picture of transmission of motifs, the Arab route should by no means be excluded. Still, put into the context of a vibrant, interactive Europe with frequent exchange of ideas between East and West, the Arabic theory must be regarded as a possible supplement rather than the unique source for the origin of the love lyric. In any case, we ought not stray any further from our subject, since the leap from Provence to Champagne and the romances of Northern France is itself great, and the question of actual influence of love lyrics on romances still open, as is the question of how seriously to take courtly love -- was Andreas Capellanus writing a satire of the "courts of love" of the court of Marie de Champagne? And why does Chrétien seem to exhibit such distaste in attempting to treat the subject in the Lancelot romance?

[345]Allison Elliott, *Roads to Paradise*, p. 132n.

with the Bulgar sect of the Bogomils, who, beginning in around 930, revolted forcefully against what they perceived as empty pomp in the Orthodox church. According to the sect, riches and worldly preoccupations were inherently evil, the work of Satan. "Our Father" was the only acceptable prayer for the group, others prayers deemed too extravagant, meat and wine were forbidden, the cross was to be detested as the symbol of Christ's suffering, and people were not to marry.

The sect was absorbed into the Byzantine empire after Basil II (the Bulgar-slayer) conquered the Bulgars in 1018. Its extreme rejection of the world led to a split, one group, the Dragovitsians, believing not only that Satan, formerly brother of Christ, made a contract with Adam to hold the world until the advent of Christ, but going one step further to suggest that Satan was an omnipotent, independent being, the equal of God. Thus, a sect seemingly close to the Gnostic creation myth -- that the world is evil and in need of redemption because it was created by the Devil -- began to resemble the Manicheans through this dualism of good and evil.

At its creation in the tenth century by Bogomil, the group rejected hierarchy and priests, but, as had occurred with early Christianity, by the twelfth century it had evolved into a monastic community with specific rites and leaders in order to survive. At this point, repression drove the Bogomils north, where their faith became the official religion of Bosnia and Bulgaria until assimilation into Islam in the fourteenth century, leaving only folktale survivals of apocryphal reminiscences. Others fled to Italy and from there to southern France, where they were established as the Cathar church, their beliefs summarized in the *Interrogatio Ioannis* subsequently translated by the Inquisition. Many

prominent people joined the sect, even the queen's confessor. Despite prosecution -- the first group in Western Europe to be burned at the stake for their beliefs -- they criticized the corrupt clergy of the Catholic church who married or held concubines and prohibited translation and possession of the *Bible.* The sect remained in contact with Constantinople, as her bishop was present at a council in Toulouse in 1167; many local beliefs entered into the religion of the Cathars, however, making for further developments: they rejected the concept of Hell and Purgatory, since Hell is actually the world, made to imprison the spirit. Satan is the Yaweh of the Old Testament, and the real God is far away in Heaven, a spirit. Thus, Christ's physical body was an illusion. Finally, since the world is evil, the ideal is the disappearance of humanity. It follows that debauchery is preferable to marriage.[346]

Such was the background, therefore, and at least one explanation for the literature of Courtly Love in Provençal poetry: if marriage and procreation were evil, then the ideal is our conception of forbidden or extra-marital love.[347] According to Eliade, after an inconclusive debate with the Catholics in Carcassonne in 1204, the Cathars became the victims of Innocent III's new Crusade, and the only Crusade actually to accomplish its

[346]Mircea Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas,* (Chicago, 1985), Vol. 3, pp. 181-185.

[347]Of course, the more conventional explanations propose either the spontaneous genesis of courtly love as an invention of the troubadours, or the influence of Arabic literature through Spain and travel during the Crusades. Our suggestions do not preclude these explanations, but they do open another avenue; with the close connections which we propose between East and West during this period, the borrowings form Hellenistic sources or possibly Bogomil beliefs bring another dimension to this question which, in any case, can never be answered in full. For a definition and discussion of courtly love, see C.S. Lewis *The Allegory of Love*, (Oxford, 1936).

goal. The Duke of Burgundy and the Counts of Nevers, Champagne and Blois were promised the spoils of the enterprise, and the French king the expansion of his kingdom. As a result, many people perished, the Inquisition gained strength, and "among [the results]... one may count... the ruin of the meridional civilization, which notably included the work of Eleanor and her 'Courts of Love' with their exaltation of the Lady and the poetry of the troubadours."[348]

Thus we might consider courtly love a hybrid invention of Byzantine provenance, combining the sentiments of the Byzantine romance with the requirements of a heretical sect of Byzantine origin. Interestingly, it appears that the troubadours of Provence did not see themselves as the inventors of courtly love. They appear instead to draw upon a tradition which has somehow gained currency around them. Dronke, in studying the lyrics of Guillaume IX, Alienor's grandfather, considered traditionally as the first courtly love poet, concludes that among his ten lyrics five boast of his conquests, one of those being a farewell to love and joy, and, in the other five, he discerns elements of parody so that his poems, far from being the beginning of courtly love, seem to react against this notion which is already in existence: "he is neither the founder nor even an exponent of amour courtois... he was conscious of it around him, exasperated, beguiled and amused by it, and... at times he used it as a point of departure...".[349]

Although we have traced courtly love to the ancient romances through the unlikely intermediary of the ascetic sect of the Cathars, we should give some credit to the native

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[348]Mircea Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas,* Vol. 3, p. 187.

[349]Peter Dronke, *The Medieval Poet and his World*, p. 247.

soil from which it sprouted. We must admit that something unique in the chemistry of the circumstances in twelfth-century France added a new dimension to the code of manhood. Certainly Catholic Christianity with its adoration of the Virgin Mary furnished an example of devotion to a Lady. Still, even as the result of a combination of circumstances, the love portrayed in French romances has a strong Hellenistic-byzantine element, which seems to escape the typical analysis as given here by Frappier: "La peinture de l'amour, indispensable désormais à tout roman digne de ce nom, entremêle... la conception antique de l'amour fatal, envoyé par les dieux, et la description minutieuse des symptômes de l'amour-maladie (toute une sémiologie venue d'Ovide...) aux notions de fin amor, invention purement médiévale opposée dans son essense au libertinage du poète latin."[350]

In any case, ideal love is the topos par excellence of the new romances written in France, and these romances will show a more than coincidental tie to Byzantium. Jean Frappier, in fact, terms this period the "twelfth-century Renaissance", and attributes the phenomenon directly to the opening of the East by the Crusades:

> "les romans courtois... sont nés... dans un climat de Renaissance ou des horizons élargis favorisaient un embellissement de la vie, un hédonisme courtois, un appétit de conquête et tous les jeux de l'imagination... Aux prestiges de la fabuleuse antiquité s'est ajouté l'attrait fascinant de l'Orient, de mieux en mieux connu depuis les Croisades. Byzance surtout révélait a l'Occident ébloui une civilisation plus délicate et plus noble. Elle gardait une somme de culture profane. Les empereurs grecs apparaissaient comme les successeurs des césars romains. Byzance ressemblait à l'antiquité continuée et toujours vivante. Aussi la civilisation byzantine et, plus largement, la civilisation orientale (car l'influence du monde arabe s'exerca aussi) ont projeté leur éclat sur le décor des romans

[350]Jean Frappier, *Histoire, mythes et symbole,* p. 29.

antiques et nourri des imaginations avides de pittoresque et d'exotisme. La tradition venue des vieux auteurs latins s'est mêlée au modernisme des Croisades."[351]

6. Romans d'Antiquité

Frappier, in fact, sees the Romans d'Antiquité as a "bal masqué" with "entrecroisements de l'antiquité, du moyen âge féodal et courtois, de l'Orient et de son luxe inoui..."[352] He notes that the magical element in these romances is still a man-made one, as is the artifice which we have already remarked in the Byzantine romances as well as in Byzantine ceremonials:

> "nos romanciers décrivaient complaisamment des objets et des édifices d'une richesse extraordinaire et d'une ornementation surchargée (tente d'Adraste et char du devin Amphiaracis dans *Thèbes*, tombeau de Camille dans l'*Enéas*, chambre de beautés dans *Troie*). On reconnaît là, comme dans les automates imaginés sur le modèle de ceux que les Occidentaux admiraient à Byzance--statues qui chantent ou jouent d'instruments de musique--les prestiges de l'Orient exagérés comme par des miroirs grossissants."[353]

He remarks the same taste for luxury in the Alexandre de Paris versions of the *Roman d'Alexandre*: "un plaisir sensuel", "richesse fabuleuse", "confort inouï", indeed, "des merveilles de méchanique, des automates prodigieux -- [comme] dans les autres romans d'antiquité." He notes specifically an admiral's tomb in Babylon, an automated

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[351]Jean Frappier, *Histoire, mythes et symbole,* p. 26.

[352]Ibid., pp. 30-31.

[353]Ibid., p. 31.

harp, and twirling statues of children.[354] Having characterized the descriptions of such objects "mosaïques incrustées dans le récit, les descriptions [qui] forment le principal ornement littéraire du *Roman d'Alexandre*" and their reference to "une Antiquité peinte aux couleurs mêlées du Moyen Âge et de l'Orient," he goes on to suggest that such descriptions are derived from the *chansons de geste* and are simply amplified in the *Romans d'Antiquité*.[355] How can this be, however, when objects admittedly of Byzantine inspiration are incorporated in these texts in the manner of the Hellenistic/Byzantine descriptions which have been termed "ekphraseis"?

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We have already speculated as to a Hellenistic element in the romances' description of love. A systematic study of their love element by Rosemary Jones underscores our point. According to Jones, although "courtly love" in the sense of gallantry towards an exalted woman or unattainable, often adulterous "fole amore" occasionally is used to spice up these reworkings of ancient romances, they by no means reflect the generally moralistic and non-courtly attitude of their authors towards human relationships. She studies the love relationships in the *Romans d'Antiquité* in comparison to their models, and arrives at some interesting conclusions.

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[354]Jean Frappier, "Les Romans Antiques" in *Grundriss der Romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters*, p. 163.

[355]Ibid., p. 166.

Jones defines courtly love as ennobling service by a humble lover to an idealized woman; it involves free choice, and the lady is generally passive. In the majority of cases, relationships in the *Romans d'Antiquité* are initiated by women. For example, in the *Roman de Troie* of Benoît de Sainte-Maure, of the four major love stories elaborated by Benoît, only Achilles is first attracted to Polyxena. In the other cases, Medea chooses Jason, Helen Paris, and Briseis Diomedes. In each case, the potential of a lasting, honorable relationship is the criterion for success or failure. The Jason and Medea story is elaborated from a brief mention in Dares and possibly Ovid's Metamorphoses; the conditions, however, are changed: there is no actual marriage, and Medea does not go on to become a murderess and a witch; still the new situation is not a courtly one, since the implication is not of love-service but of a promise to marry: Medea speaks first to Jason, offers to help him, and even invites him to her room. He responds to these advances in a courteous manner, but, when further adventure calls, in Benoît's version, he breaks his promise and abandons his prospective bride. Thus, this "fole amor" is condemned in that the woman has unrealistic expectations about the prospects of the relationship.[356]

The Paris and Helen relationship is much more favorable; Benoît's Helen is much nobler than Dictys', and the initial courtship by Paris is downplayed. They are of similar background and equally attractive, and thus seem to be a perfect match, destined to be together:

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[356]Rosemarie Jones, *Love in the Romans d'Antiquité*, (London, 1972), pp. 43-46.

"Tant erent bel, ne me merveil
S'il (i.e. Amors) les voleit joster pareil"(4363).

In this respect, Paris and Helen may be seen as the direct descendants of their Hellenistic ancestors -- possibly through the mediation of the twelfth-century Byzantine romance -- who were also of equal beauty and worth, although not thus perceived by the disapproving environment. Paris offers Helen his service, which she accepts for practical reasons, and they marry before arriving in Troy. From this point, Helen is like a daughter to King Priam, and the marriage relationship is more traditional than courtly: Paris need not display his prowess for Helen, but can also acknowledge defeat. Helen sympathizes with the Trojans and mourns her husband's death; in order to preserve this ideal, unreproachable character, Benoît even eliminates Helen's references to her previous marriage, thus preserving her admirable qualities, which allows Menelaus to take her back at the end.[357]

As to the other relationships, Briseida is reproached by Benoît for leaving Troilus for Diomedes in a general critique of the fickleness of women; Diomedes is courtly at first, but the outcome of the liaison is not happy. Achilles moreover would like to render service to the beautiful Polyxena, but he cannot keep a promise to refrain from fighting, creating a tragic conflict and bringing about his own doom.[358]

The same criteria seem to apply in the Roman-inspired *Romans d'Antiquité*; in the *Roman d'Enéas*, derived from Virgil, Dido, like Medea and Briseida, takes the initiative

[357]Rosemarie Jones, *Love in the Romans d'Antiquité*, pp. 47-50.

[358]Ibid., pp. 50-58.

in a vain love which is condemned as "felenie", "faire son talant", "vergondee", "putage", "luxure", and "s'il foloie". As elsewhere, Jones attempts to minimize the influence of Ovid on the Romans d'Antiquité; although descriptions of the nature of love and the effects on the sufferer have Ovidian overtones (restlessness, impulsiveness, wounding by love, the love sickness), they are often found in the original; Virgil notes that Dido is wounded by love, frenzied or mad, and pale; he describes love as a flame or fire. The Old French romance merely shifts emphasis, making her more responsible for her actions, attracted to Aeneas even before the fateful magical spell, whereas Aeneas "becomes a puppet, an object for Dido's lovesickness". When Aeneas must follow his destiny, she is left to commit suicide. In contrast to this unnatural love, Lavinia, when she falls in love with Aeneas, also takes the initiative, but knows that the attraction is mutual and a lasting relationship possible.[359]

The *Roman de Thèbes* likewise adds to the love intrigue (the Salmanche episode), downplays religion (the Aeneas lacks the Cupid scene) and homosexuality (Benoit's Achilles has a heterosexual experience) and shifts the romance from a post-marital to a pre-marital time, but only to satirize courtly love. Moreover, the parallel to the Hellenistic romance is obvious: Antigone and Parthenopeus as well as Ismene and Atys are "of suitable age, of equal beauty and social rank...", as are, for that matter, the protagonists of the poems "Narcissus" and "Piramus and Thisbe" of this period.[360]

Finally, the additions to the *Roman d'Alexandre* follow the same lines, except that

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[359]Rosemarie Jones, *Love in the Romans d'Antiquité,* pp. 30-37.

[360]Ibid., pp. 20-28.

two different versions are available, more obviously highlighting the changes.[361] In the *Alexandre de Paris* version, the changes are mostly cosmetic: a courtly description of Olympias, the names of some "amies", some slight elaborations, such as Roxane's expression of grief, Alexander's courtly behavior, for example to the queen of the Amazons, and his general moderation, chastising others for infidelity, and resisting the fatal embraces of nymphs. In general, "the expression of feeling in love is almost completely lacking in the *Roman d'Alexandre*." The Lambert le Tort version, however, contains the predictable elaboration of "unimportant love interludes". In the first, Alexander's knights fall in love with Amazon girls; the episode meets with the approval of the queen and of the author when the motivation turns out to be marriage. The second

[361] According to Jean Frappier, there were actually numerous Old French versions and/or continuations of the Alexander romance in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The first of these, by Albéric de Pisançon, dates from the beginning -- first third -- of the twelfth century, but only a 105-line octosyllabic fragment of this version, on Alexander's infancy, survives. It appears to be from a brief account, in the style of the hagiographic works and *chansons de geste* of the period. A second version, in 785 decasyllabic lines, dates from 1160-65; this one has two continuations, Lambert le Tort de Châteaudun's account of Alexander's adventures in the orient -- which Frappier considers one of the superior medieval texts due to its concise yet powerful style -- from around 1165-70, along with a *Mort Alixandre*. This version, in decasyllabic lines, takes more care to portray Alexander as an aristocrat, a concern which is carried over into the "baroque" description of luxuries of the third version. The third version by Alexandre de Paris, (1180-90), compiles the story from the previous sources into a "vulgate" equivalent: 16,000 dodecasyllabic lines, comprising four sections: 1) from infancy to the campaign of Tyre, 2) from Gaza and Jerusalem to the first defeat of Darius, 3) defeats of Darius and Porus, of the Amazons, travel under sea and in the air, marvels of India, and the Queen Candace episode -- this section following Lambert's section -- and 4) Alexander's death, his funeral and lamentations. All versions make much of Alexander's education, which is one of the distinguishing marks of the hero of romance over the hero of epic; later works include among others a *Venjance Alixandre* and a thirteenth-century prose version. (Jean Frappier "Romans d'Antiquité" in *Grundriss der Romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters*, pp. 151-6.)

finds Alexander and his men dallying with flower maidens in the wood; to preserve the virtue of his protagonist, Lambert notes that he offers to make one his queen, but she prefers to remain in the wood. Finally, the motherly figure of Queen Candace is turned into the predictable lovestruck female, making advances through her correspondence. Still the emphasis of this romance remains on the fantastic adventures of the original, much more than on these interpolated love intrigues.[362]

7. Roman de la Rose, and the Medieval Allegorizing Tendency

As we have seen, the condition of the protagonists in the *Romans d'Antiquité*, as well as their concept of salvation through mutual love, apparently mirrors that of the Hellenistic and Byzantine romances in tone in spite of the vogue for courtly love, which clearly appears artificial not only when compared to the antique source material but also through the attitudes betrayed by the authors. Many subsequent Old French works seem to be directly inspired by the Byzantine romances; *Aucassin and Nicolette*'s plotline certainly resembles them.[363]

Even the allegorical masterpiece, *The Romance of the Rose*, seems to borrow some imagery from Efstathios' romance. This is plausible, since Curtius credits the author of the second part, Jean de Meun, with "wide reading" as he points to his knowledge of the

[362]Rosemarie Jones, *Love in the Romans d'Antiquité,* pp. 60-65.

[363]Saintsbury comments: "I cannot read of Hysmine without being reminded of Nicolette." George Saintsbury, *The Flourishing of Romance and the Rise of Allegory,* p. 381.

legend of the Golden Fleece, which Denis de Rougement places at the head of narratives of quests, including the Grail legend:

> ...la mer...
> Jasons... primes la passa
> Quant les navies compassa
> Pour la toison d'or aler querre."[364]

Saintsbury, after dismissing the rest of 12th-century Byzantine writing as "something which, though scarcely literature, is at any rate written matter,"[365] praises the style of *Ysminias and Ysmine,* which "has interests of character which distinguish its author and itself not merely from the herd of chroniclers and commentators who make up the bulk of Byzantine literature so-called, but even from such more respectable but somewhat featureless work as Anna Comnena's."[366] He is even more emphatic in pointing to the connections with the Lorris/Meung work of the following century: "there is something in the descriptions more medieval than those of Achilles [Tatius], more like the *Romance of the Rose*, to which, indeed, there is a curious resemblance of atmosphere... Triplets of epithet..., a frequent economy of conjunctions,... the resort to personification -- for instance, in the battle of Love and Shame, which serves as climax to the elaborate description of the lovers' kissing."[367] The triplets will in turn re-emerge in another

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[364]E.R. Curtius, *Essays on European Literature*, (Princeton, 1973), pp. 484-5. Also see Denis de Rougemont, *Love in the Western World.*

[365]George Saintsbury, *The Flourishing of the Romance and the Rise of Allegory*, p. 376.

[366]Ibid., p. 380.

[367]Ibid., p. 381. Many critics like Heather Arden see more Latin inspiration for the *Roman de la Rose*; she notes, for example, Prudentius' *Psychomachia*, a fifth-century work of Christian allegory, and points out that "Latin authors used allegory and

Byzantine allegorical work of the fourteenth century.

As to the beginning of the *Romance of the Rose*, the Guillaume de Lorris section, W. T. H. Jackson sees it as an allegorical counterpart to the descent/ascent structure which we have described as the universal property of the romance. According to Jackson, "The... actions of the lover... constitute a series of adventures, each... show[ing]... failure... like [combat with] the enemies any knight encounters on a quest." According to Jackson, the construction of a castle around the rose and the imprisonment of Bel Aceuil at the end of the Guillaume de Lorris section mark the darkest moment in the hero's quest. (As we shall see in the grail romance, the unfinished work's intrigue cuts off at approximately the same point, the hero having hit the rock bottom of his failure, but acquiring the understanding which will lead ultimately to success.) Thus, had Guillaume de Lorris continued the "romance", we would have depicted the hero "gradually overcoming these qualities which oppose his union," in a type of ascent. Jean de Meung's breaking of this romanesque pattern in the second half of the work constitutes a disregard -- knowingly, we would argue based on his extensive scholarship -- of "the necessary connection between romance and allegory."[368]

Jackson further points out the importance of "allegorization" for medieval texts in general, including the romances which we shall presently turn to: "It may be easily

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personification even more than the Greeks." Moreover, she considers the serious treatment of love as a medieval phenomenon, entering the Roman de la Rose through the *Romans d'Antiquité*. (Heather M. Arden, *The Romance of the Rose,* (Boston, 1987), pp. 21-30). Although this is mainly true, it is not unrealistic to suggest at least some hints of simultaneous Byzantine inspiration.

[368]W. T. H. Jackson, *The Challenge of the Medieval Text*, (New York, 1985), p. 167.

argued that medieval writers allegorized freely and that they constantly interpreted anecdotes from the classics and even works of doubtful morality as parables of Christian revelation."[369] The idea behind allegorization is that language, the *logos* or *verbum* is of divine origin. Thus, "Through the *verbum* God reveals the totality of his message for mankind... the word... is always more than the material objects or the events which it describes."[370] He notes that allegorization began in Ancient Greece with interpretaions of Homer, before taking on Judaeo-Christian significance. On this matter, Robert Browning traces the development of the practice from the turn of Greek religion towards moral concepts through Xenophanes and others, to the Stoics, and lather the Neo-Pythagoreans and Neo-Platonists. All searched for hidden meaning in the works of Homer; thus, "the systematic search by the Neo-platonists for a deep and hidden meaning in the poems [of Homer] marks the climax of a long process of elevation of Homer from the status of an inspired poet to that of an... infallible prophet, a man who had privileged access not only to the secrets of the universe but to the mind of God...".[371] The Middle Ages, despite their Christian tone, did not diminish the linguistic stature of Homer, so that his works, with glosses from late antiquity, continued to be used -- as attested in the ninth century. (Browning points out that Byzantium was not the only civilization to use works in an archaic language no longer in use as scholastic models.) By the twelfth century,

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[369]W. T. H. Jackson, *The Challenge of the Medieval Text*, p. 157.

[370]Ibid., p. 173.

[371]Robert Browning, "The Byzantines and Homer", in Robert Lamberton and John J. Keaney, eds., *Homer's Ancient Readers: The Hermeneutics of the Greek Epic's Earliest Exegetes*, (Princetion, 1992), p. 135.

a "radical change" in the reception of Homer begins to occur. Whereas his paganism had been taken for granted up to this time, authors of paraphrases and commentaries now began to search for Christian allegorical symbolism in the pagan bard's works.[372] This phenomenon, as well as a modernizing and popularizing tendency, -- parallel to the contemporizing of Antiquity in the *Romans d'Antiquité* -- is discernible in the works of Psellos, Tzetzes[373], I. Porphyrogenitus, Manasses, and particularly Niketas, who saw in the journey to Ithaka the search for the Heavenly Jerusalem. Indeed, Christian allegory was getting so out-of-hand, that Eustathius, the author of a monumental 2,500-page commentary on Homer, a canonized saint who "reveals better than any other writer the richness of Byzantine attitudes to Homer and to the whole of traditional Hellenic culture in a period of experiment, innovation and reassessment," has to warn his readers not to lose the balance between historical and mythological "reality" and allegorical significance.[374]

Although Homer's original works are not available in the West until the fifteenth century, a similar attitude to allegorizing is discernible in works of the twelfth century. The Albéric version of the Alexander romance, for example, is concerned about its choice

[372]This is a peculiar shift since, as we have noted, the other literature of Hellenistic Antiquity had been ignored in the previous centuries in favor of Christian authors. Now, whereas the romances returned in all their pagan glory, Homer underwent a simultaneous effort at partial christianization.

[373]His 9,741-line political verse version of Homer's works was originally intended to acquaint Emperess Irene with Greek culture.

[374]Robert Browning, "The Byzantines and Homer," pp. 137-144. This is reminiscent of Dante's editorializing as to the different levels of meaning in his *Inferno.*

of matter, "Que tot non sie vanitas."[375] Even more important for our conclusions, according to Jackson, concerning the chivalric milieu of the courtly romance, "Chrétien says that it must now be compared to reality... to examine the problems of sexual love in society from several points of view by using the romance conventions of love and adventure as a point of departure and to demonstrate the futility of those conventions... There can be little doubt that a finished Perceval would have pointed sharply to the contrast between the amoral... Arthurian court and the world of the Christian religion."[376] It is crucial to our understanding of Arthurian texts to appreciate the superimposition on medieval texts in general of this Christian allegorical component.

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[375]Jean Frappier, "Les Romans antiques", in *Grundriss der Romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters*, p. 153.

[376]W. T. H. Jackson, *The Challenge of the Medieval Text*, P. 178.

CHAPTER XII

TRISTAN AND ISEULT, THE ARTHURIAN CYCLE AND THE FLOWERING OF THE OLD FRENCH ROMANCE

1. Matière de Bretagne: Refutation of the Celtic Thesis

A new vein of French romances, however, seems to draw on Celtic legends. Beginning with *Tristan et Iseult* and encompassing the adventures of King Arthur's knights and the search for the Holy Grail, the new cycle will be termed the *matière de Bretagne*. Some critics, drawing on the scanty evidence of Welsh manuscripts, will mistakenly suggest an isolated development of the romance cycle in Wales, without external influences, on the basis of oral Celtic mythological tradition and heroic sagas which have disappeared. As we have attempted to show so far in this work, any attempt to explain the rise of the romance must take into account the translation of the romance genre as well as the motifs of the romance from Byzantium into Italy or Norman Sicily and to the West; refusing to consider this evidence is like hypothesizing the reinvention of the wheel. Holmes recognizes "the need for examining carefully the medieval background," and he identifies "Three dominating spheres of influence [which] made possible the rise of the romance form -- and incidentally of Chrétien de Troyes and his Arthurian themes. The great spread of territory under the Anglo-Norman King of England; the 'look' towards Germany, Byzantium and Sicily which had developed in Eastern France (including Champagne;) and the immense rise of the schools and other

clerical activity in the cathedral centers."[377] As we have shown, it is precisely these regions which were instrumental in bringing the Hellenistic romance to the West.

There are, however, critics who choose to ignore this context. In a 1982 article, Rachel Bromwich concludes that the Arthurian Cycle was composed in Wales, between the 9th and 11th centuries, "unaffected by any external influences from the continent of Europe."[378] She makes this argument on the basis of sources that appear self-contradictory. First, she studies names in texts and attempts to attribute them to Southern and sometimes Northern England. More often than not, she ends up with Latin names, presumably common because of the Roman influence. Then, she rejects the thesis of a Celtic mythological explanation, since Celtic mythology is still an obscure field, and combs the manuscripts of Medieval Wales for references to Arthur, Tristan or Perceval. Since the results are meager at best--an isolated reference or two to suggest that Tristan was mentioned in the context of the Arthur cycle--, her conclusion is that the cycle is the result of an oral tradition, set down in a form which perhaps has disappeared.

A less doctrinaire but similarly untenable position is held by R.S. Loomis, who, after changing his mind a couple of times in his long career, finally cautiously settled on a Celtic origin for the romances. Loomis has been criticized in a 1987 article by Joseph Keller for lacking an appropriate frame for his studies: "the thinking of [such] first critics was primarily historical. First the motifs, derived from fragmentary mythologies, then the

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[377]U.T. Holmes, *Chrétien de Troyes,* p. 28.

[378]Rachel Bromwich, "Celtic Elements in Arthurian Romance", in P.B. Grout, ed, *The Legend of Arthur in the Middle Ages*, (London, 1983), p. 53.

'moulds' as Loomis frequently put it... [but] good stories are artistic unities. Dissecting them can result in the perception of dissonance [from the lack of] historical or thematic causes of which each episode is similarly an effect."[379] Keller goes on to point out that such a treatment of individual motifs outside a context results from critics "forgetting that at some time the production of even mediocre authors must have satisfied audience expectations at the episodic cause-effect level as well as at the holistic level of consonance."[380] He appeals for appreciation of works through "Jakobsonean principles of combination and selection", and "syntagmatic coherence by artistic choice."[381]

According to Keller, Loomis' theories over the years have ranged from totally "inclusive" -- seeing one source assimilated in a different one -- to totally "exclusive" -- dismissing previous theories. In 1927, he seemed to endorse a "nature cult" theory of Arthurian origins by finding Irish solar mythology analogues to Mediterranean cults. The 1927 book is criticized for separating the last theoretical chapter on narrative patterns from the bulk of the work on "minutiae" of Celtic nomenclature (similar to the Bromwich article). In 1949, Loomis rejects the previous theory of Hellenic parallels, opting for the explication of individual motifs, which put together might lead to an understanding of the complete text. In 1958, a further repudiation of the initiation theory leaves Loomis with only "a gallimaufry of originally independent stories and motifs... [a] great seething mass [of]... hereditary lore." Thus, the *matière de Bretagne* represents individual sources,

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[379]Joseph Keller, "Paradigm Shifts in the Grail Scholarship of Jessie Weston and R.S. Loomis", (*Arthurian Interpretations*), v.1, no. 2, p. 10.

[380]Ibid., p. 18.

[381]Ibid.

separate oral traditions, conflation, contamination, misinterpretation and corruption of early sources. Thus, he rejects interesting speculation about narrative patterns in folktales or a Round Table in Jerusalem supposedly the table of the Last Supper, and opts for explanations of individual peculiarities, such as the expression "li cors beneiz" which, mistakenly thought to refer to the Body of Christ, actually means "the blessed horn." Backing off in the 1963 work *The Grail: from Celtic Myth to Christian Symbol*, Loomis suggests that "the author of the *Queste* Christianized the empty wonder world of the Celts, with the result that some of the most paradoxical passages are absorbed into the Christian legend."[382]

If we look at Loomis' 1963 work on the Arthurian romance, we note that Keller is absolutely correct in that Loomis loses the big picture by concentrating on details. He begins insightfully, noting that Medieval authors would attempt to make plain rather than to obscure their sources, and that "medieval literature, far more than modern, is a product of tradition." Thus, "without understanding the forces which went to [its] making... one cannot understand the work... and right understanding is the basis of all true appreciation." He even quotes Virgil: *"Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas."*[383] Once he begins his interpretation, however, the obvious problems begin to surface.

Loomis enumerates the usual early mentions of Arthur in English sources, such as Gododdin's allusion "though he was not Arthur"(6c.) and Nennius *Historia Britonum*

[382]Joseph Keller, "Paradigm Shifts in the Grail Scholarship of Jessie Weston and R.S. Loomis," pp. 13-16.

[383]R.S. Loomis, *The Development of Arthurian Romance*, pp. 7-11.

(c. 800) where Arthur scores twelve victories against invaders. During the eighth, one "Arthur bore the image of the Virgin Mary... and [then] the pagans were put to flight and a great slaughter made of them through the might of our Lord Jesus Christ and of Holy Mary his mother." Later, Arthur single-handedly killed 960 men.[384] Here, Loomis makes the connection with Christianity: "By the victory of Mount Badon, it seems, Arthur became the Messiah of the Britons, destined to return one day as their Saviour even after they had been driven down into Cornwall or across the Channel to Brittany."[385] He fails, however, to follow through on the important point that from the start, Arthur is a Christian hero, and Christian symbolism should naturally be attached to him, and would have been expected by the writers and the readers of the developmental period.[386]

Loomis fails to consider this perspective, but instead plays the archeologist digging for obscure meanings from the few other early fragmentary remains. The tenth-century "Annals of Wales" date the battle of Badon to 516 and Arthur's death to 537 in a battle with "Medraut", and in poems of the following century, Arthur enumerates his knights and their accomplishments to a gate-keeper, where Kei figures as the most prominent, triumphing over lions, witches and the monster cat of later romances, the "Cath Paluc". In another fragment, the "Spoils of Annwn," Arthur and his companions -- some, like

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[384]R.S. Loomis, *The Development of Arthurian Romance*, pp. 17-18.

[385]Ibid., p. 18.

[386]To underscore this point, we may note that at least six English Saints' Lives of the period include Arthur either as the proud but ultimately humbled foil for the saint, or as benefactor, granting of privileges to the saint.

Lugh Lamhfada, a prototype of Lancelot, having names of Irish or Welsh deities -- go to the dwelling of gods "not unlike... the deities of Homer" to steal a magic cauldron. Their dwelling is obscure, reminiscent of the Greek Elysium; perhaps an island fortress or underground. The cauldron has a magical property, in that it tests the valor of a knight by refusing to cook for a coward. Around it are nine maidens.[387]

The cauldron is won after a tough struggle with only seven of the companions returning. Loomis notes that no such cauldrons appear in later stories, but insists that its reminiscence is present in later "testing vessels", the Grail, a horn, a cup, and that nine sorceresses appear in a fortress in a later romance. Now there is no indication that such materials would have been at the disposal of a later author, nor is the comparison so compelling as to suggest a direct borrowing. Moreover, even if we were to accept the borrowing of a few colorful details from Celtic legend the context and skeleton of the story would still remain matters that need to be explained -- and will be presently. Nevertheless, from his scanty evidence, Loomis concludes that "the Matter of Britain originated in the blending of historic reminiscences of a British battle-leader with a highly fanciful mythological tradition going back to pagan times."[388] If we are to accept this theory, then we must be satisfied with a very fragmentary picture of the origins of Arthurian literature, as though a few mosaic tiles from late antiquity might explain away a marvel like Hagia Sophia. If we accepted this explanation blindly, then we would have no understanding of the genre of romance, of the context of its composition and of the

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[387]R.S. Loomis, *The Development of Arthurian Romance*, pp. 19-21.

[388]Ibid., pp. 21-22.

subject matter available to the twelfth-century writers of romance.

2. Stein's Theory

Among the more imaginative speculations about Arthur's origins is Walther Stein's. Stein sees the Arthur legend in the context of Indo-European legends concerning the forces of Good, coming from the North, fighting the forces of Evil coming from the South:

> "King Arthur stands out in history as a personality engaged in mighty conflicts against a power that arose from the South...[the Romans?] [In] ancient Persia... the original divine humanity first descended upon the earth at the Pole... The Greeks... describe this land as that of the Hyperboreans, a land whither Apollo, god of the spiritual power of the sun, returned again and again... The Germanic peoples called... 'Muspelheim'... the polar antithesis of the northern 'Nifelheim'. The Persians said that the Ahuras--... gods of light like Apollo--inhabited the North, and the Devas--gods of darkness--streamed against them from the South. The beings whom the Persians called Ahuras and the Indians Asuras were addressed by the Germanic people as Asen, and the Indian word 'Deva' (in the Persian Daera) we find in the Germanic as Wanen... An Asen-figure but in terrestrial and human form--is King Arthur."[389]

Although such fanciful anthropological excursions are far too exotic for early chroniclers of Arthur to be aware of, -- it is imperative to recall the Medieval Christian frame of reference of the authors of the twelfth century romance -- if pushed to its ultimate origins every story on earth might have one single ultimate spring. It is not our purpose to go so far backwards, but instead we must search for concrete, tangible sources,

[389]Walther Johannes Stein, *The Death of Merlin: Arthurian Myth and Alchemy*, (Edinburgh, 1989), p. 123.

plausibly within reach of the storytellers. Such sources, as we insist, are most likely to be found in the classical heritage transmitted in the tri-partite formula of Christian tradition, Pagan reminiscences underlying Christianity, and the inspiration from Byzantium. As to the symbolism of Good and Evil in the Arthur legend, a more likely source are English Saints' Lives. It has been noted that many English saints are of Royal blood, making the connection quite compelling. In these "Royal Saints' Lives", the saints generally become martyrs in battle against Pagan forces, thus offering a likely prototype which, popularized, reaches its pinnacle of success in the secular form of King Arthur which overshadows later hagiography: Royal Saints' Lives in England after the 12th century are merely elaborate reworkings of their predecessors, and no new ones are composed.[390] Indeed, it will be recalled from the last section that Arthur was considered a sort of Britannic Messiah, and that he figures in several lives of saints. Such material, in any case, is not adequate to explain the birth of the Arthurian Cycle.

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[390]Susan J. Ridyard makes this point although she gives a different explanation for the decline in composition of original Saints' Lives. According to Ridyard, the change in political circumstances after 1066 curtailed the development of new cults, but did not dampen the enthusiasm for those already existing. The cult of royal saints in Anglo-Saxon England served to bring "prestige both to religious communities and to royal dynasties; they also formed important foci for the working out of relations between those communities and dynasties and between the several kingdoms and dynasties of Anglo-Saxon England. The Norman invasion of 1066 destroyed for ever the political context within which those cults had been formed. But it did not destroy, or even attempt to destroy, the cults themselves.... Norman churchmen [were]... read[y] to make the heroes of the past serve the politics of the present."(Susan J. Ridyard, *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England,* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 251.)

3. Celtic Origins and Historical Perspective

Purely speculative theories as to the origins of the Arthur legend are hardly constructive; moreover, it is a fallacy to equate the origin of the Arthur legend, from a possibly historical sixth-century military leader to the legendary hero of pseudo-chronicles, with the origin of the romances set about his court -- as though excavations of a palace at Ithaca might help us understand whether Homer is one or more persons. Although somewhat dated, the work of J.D. Bruce which summarized the research on the Arthurian romance up to the 1920s, because of its encyclopedic scope and strong emphasis on history, seems to provide much more plausible evaluations of source material, and can help to point us in the right direction.[391]

In this work, Bruce asserts that the meagre creativity required to produce medieval romances ought to be attributed to the individual authors drawing from motifs available to them. According to Bruce, the Celtic element in such motifs is minimal, and mainly drawn from Brittany: "When Marie de France and her contemporaries refer to *lais bretons* as their sources, they have Brittany in mind, and their lays are... based on Breton stories, as far as they are of Celtic origin at all."[392] Indeed, the only complete British

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[391]Harry F. Williams terms this work a "masterly summary of Arthurian scholarship" although in obvious need of supplementation due to its age and emphasis on history over interpretation -- which for our purposes is quite useful. (Harry F. Williams, "Interpretations of the *Conte del graal*", (Lexington, 1983), p. 146.) Loomis has termed Bruce's work a "monumental... and prodigious feat of erudition and synthesis. (R.S. Loomis, *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages,* (Oxford, 1959), p. 5.)

[392]J.D. Bruce, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance From the Beginnings Down to the Year 1300*, vol 1, p. 60. Bruce shows that these best exemplars of medieval "romantic

Arthurian romances worth mentioning before Mallory's prose compilation are *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, both from the fourteenth century, thus much later than the formation of the general Arthurian corpus, as are Middle

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charm" contain geographical references to Brittany rather than to Britain, and that Marie de France, moreover, does not even seem to know the Breton language: she misinterprets "l'aostic" -- the nightingale -- making it one word (Laostic), and makes of "bleiz lauaret", or talking wolf, the one-word title of her werewolf lai. From such conjectures, Bruce can say that "there can be no reasonable doubt that Brittany was the source of whatever is Celtic in the romances of Chrétien and his followers," but he must caution that even for the lais, where reference to a source is made, no actual lais in Breton survive. (pp. 62-3, 68).

Much more recently, Mortimer J. Donovan is even more cautious in attempting to cite sources for Marie de France; he notes that the extant French poems are indeed older than lais in Middle English, and thus, "since sources in Celtic literature are oral... for practical purposes hers can be considered the first and set the standard." Donovan goes on to suggest that, like her fables, which recall Aesop, the lais go back to sources in antiquity, as might be suggested by the lines

"*Custume fu as anciens,*
Ceo tes(ti)moine Preciens,
Es livres ke jadis feseient
Assez oscurement diseient
Pur ceus ki a venir esteient
E ki aprendre les deveient,
K'i peussent gloser la lettre
E de lur sen le surplus mettre."

For Donovan, this reference implies that Marie de France was preparing her readers "for her reworking of the ancient sources of the lays -- a reworking actually accomplished in the lays as we have them." (Mortimer J. Donovan, *The Breton Lay,* (Notre Dame, 1969), pp. 6-7, 14, 24.)

As far as the Arthurian material of the lais is concerned, W. T. H. Jackson sees the influence of Arthurian romance, and particularly of Chrétien de Troyes, on Marie de France. Her works, in an otherwise vulgar medium, represent for him a satire on the romance genre: "there seem to be distinct echoes [of *Perceval*] in *Lanval*... [and] more precise evidence of acquaintance with Chrétien's works... the verbal reminiscences, even reminiscences of whole passages, of the works of Chrétien de Troyes are very clear... The use of such material in a form devoted to peasant tales comes close to mocking the genre from which it derives." (W. T. H. Jackson, *The Challenge of the Medieval Text*, pp. 200, 217.)

English adaptations of the Perceval story.[393] Like Bruce, we shall conclude that Insular sources for our romances are simply non-existent -- "complete absence of all Breton records from the Middle Ages"[394] -- but, moreover, there is very little in them, besides conventional fighting sequences, that cannot be explained through alternate sources.

Considering the extant Welsh material, the *Black Book of Caermathen*, the *Book of Hergest*, the *Book of Aneurin* and the *Book of Taliessin*, he concludes that "these little poems played virtually no part in the transmission of Arthurian material to the French poets."[395] Moreover, the tales in the *Mabinogion* collection which resemble Chrétien de Troyes' romances -- "Owen", "Peredur", "Geraint and Enid", and "Kulwich and Olwen", -- are more than likely inspired by the French romances. Furthermore, Bruce sees in the boar of the "Kulwich and Olwen" story a reference to the Minotaur.[396] He also points out that Irish epic is the least like French, since it, like the Norse epic, is in prose, while the Germanic, Greek and Italian are in verse.[397] He adds that Arthur is unknown to native Irish literature, and although some motifs are vaguely reminiscent of Irish sagas, their influence "seems... to have been greatly exaggerated."[398] Moreover,

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[393]J.D. Bruce, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance*, p. 123. As Bruce notes, this is not unusual since, after the Norman conquest of Britain in 1066, the language of the ruling class was French.(p. 125)

[394]Ibid., p. 88.

[395]Ibid., p. 44.

[396]Ibid., p. 46.

[397]Ibid., p. 52.

[398]Ibid., p. 92.

although a few references to Arthur do appear in Welsh literature, and, as we shall see below, his exploits are first recounted in insular, Latin pseudo-chronicles, this explanation for the origin of Arthur does not explain the origin of the romances associated with his Round Table. The insular chronicles do not suggest the romantic treatment of the material found in the French masterpieces, nor the splendor and opulence of the world they describe, nor the symbolism, which, despite its magical elements, seems to borrow more from orthodox Christianity than any primitive Celtic rituals.

4. Weston's Theory of Folklore Motifs and the Grimm Analogy.

Other critics like Jessie Weston attribute the *matière de Bretagne* to a common fund of folklore motifs derived from primitive nature cults. Drawing upon Frazer's *Golden Bough,* she explains how the first myths of agricultural communities were related to the seasons and to fertility. She discerns parallels to the Grail Castle story not in Christian or Celtic myths, but in the Hindu Rig-vedas, where Indra, god of war and of rain, slays an evil giant to free the waters, and in the *Mahabharata,* where Riscyacringa grows up as a hermit in the forest, innocent of all knowledge of worldly life, until he is seduced into marrying a king's daughter in order to restore the barren land. Such stories, she claims, are "a tradition common to the Aryan race in general."[399] It would be far-fetched, however, to accept such vague interpolations when the very same story is available through Byzantine saints' lives. According to Elliott, the 'demonic bride' motif

[399]Jessie Weston, *From Ritual to Romance*, p. 23.

has its counterpart in Saints' Lives, particularly in the St. Macarius legend: the saint has his pet lions dig a pit and bury him to his neck as penance for the following deed:

> "after he had been living for two years in peace with his lions, the devil succeeded in compassing his fall into sin. Emerging one day from his cave into the hot midday sun, Macarius suddenly noticed a woman's veil lying on the ground beside him... Forgetting to fortify himself by making the sign of the cross, he brought this delightful artifact of sex and culture into his cave. The next morning he found a pair of woman's shoes in the same place; again neglecting to cross himself, he took these in as well. On the third day, he discovered the devil in the shape of a beautiful woman, richly garbed, standing by the door... Weeping, she spun him a tale that closely replicated his own story... Believing that the woman was... his abandoned bride, Macarius also wept, and led her into his cave where he seated her beside him and gave her a supper of acorns. They spent the evening in conversation... Then came his fall: 'Then I began to grow heavy with sleep as if from excessive labor, and she with her hands stroked caressingly all my limbs, and I grew even heavier with sleep. Why should I delay? Poor me, who never before consented to sin with a woman, I knew that I had committed a sin in my sleep."[400]

Certain motifs can certainly be traced further back than the Hellenistic Age, and Holton notes that two important periods in Classical literary development, the Archaic (750-650 B.C.) and the Hellenistic, both draw in part from contact with the East: "Contact with Eastern cultures, particularly that of the Phoenicians, precipitated rapid and far-reaching developments in art, religion and literature, as well as in material culture... Renewed contact with the East played a large part in the evolution of a new literary form, the novel. The Christianization of Greek culture following the conversion of Constantine

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[400]Allison Elliott, *Roads to Paradise*, pp. 110-113. Elliott likens the demonic bride to Jung's archetype of the shadow, but such discussions would lead us away from our stated goal.(p. 115)

the Great is again an example of fruitful interaction with an external stimulus."[401] The particular concentration of themes relevant and available to authors of the twelfth-century romance, however, as well as the format of the romance, converges in the Greece of Late Antiquity and early Byzantium. It would carry us far off the mark in this work, therefore, to follow any possible motifs to even earlier sources. As J.D. Bruce notes, "the Indian analogues are so remote in time (some 2,000 years) and in space that they are really of no value."[402]

As we shall see, although Weston makes the connection with the period of the Ancient Romances, she prefers to remain in the abstract world of primitive religion. She notes that her Indian legends have their counterpart in Ancient Greece in the Adonis legend: Adonis, beloved of Aphrodite, is wounded in the thigh by a boar -- as the Fisher King is wounded? -- and must spend half a year in Hades with Persephone and half a year with Aphrodite. The progression of these motifs to the Middle Ages, in her scheme, is quite unrealistic: the Adonis cult, she claims, survives from 700 B.C. to the Middle Ages, where mourning for the death of the god by women who cut off their hair resembles a similar scene at the Grail Castle in one version of the Perceval.

The extrapolation that these "common heritage" motifs was the source of the Arthurian Cycle may be too arbitrary to be plausible; an analogous example is the animal story, such as Renard the fox, which Jakob Grimm, in 1834, attributed to a pre-historic

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[401]David Holton, ed., *Literature and Society in Renaissance Crete,* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 1.

[402]J.D. Bruce, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance*, vol. 1, p. 358.

Beast Saga common to Indo-Germanic races. According to his theory, such animal stories reflect a period when primitive people tried to bridge the gap between the human world and the world of nature around them through talking animals. He noted the affinity between Hindu, Greek and German legends, but lent his theory to nationalistic purposes, suggesting the legends revealed a pre-historic Germanic past. According to Rose, "It was proved that much of what Grimm had taken for primitive Germanic legendary material had... been borrowed by monastic poets from collections of the fables of antiquity and thence introduced into the Beast Epics... There is no definite trace either in Germany or in Northern Europe of a coherent epic Beast Saga such as Grimm had attributed to the Indo-Germanic races, and, as far as we know, the earliest epic treatment of the subject took place in the monasteries of the Middle Ages."[403]

Finally, specific objections to Weston's theories will be dealt with in their place, as we consider the legend of the Grail in its proper place.

5. Matière de Bretagne and Classical motifs: from pseudo-chronicle to romance.

With evidence for various theories so sketchy, we must begin with what we know, and attribute the rest to the most logical source. So far, our study of the romance has extracted certain common elements passed on from the Hellenistic world to the Middle Ages. At first glance, the Arthurian corpus as a whole does not seem to fit the model we have established: it consists of a series of adventures, all tied to the court of Arthur, and

[403]William Rose, *Epic of the Beast,* (London), pp. vi-vii.

ultimately of Arthur's coronation, rule, and ultimate defeat, at first glance a parabolic trajectory from obscurity to glory and on to death, the opposite of our romantic parabola of the quest with the descent and ultimate glorification and ascent.

First, we must acknowledge a divergence of source material. According to the monumental work of J.D. Bruce, although occasional mentions of Arthur exist in Welsh poetry, and Nennius' chronicle names him as a general, the framing narrative of Arthurian romance is the invention of Geoffrey of Monmouth, who for various reasons invented the Arthur of our romances, in his *Historia Regum Britanniae* (cpl. 1137), probably for political purposes, to counterbalance the continental legends of Charlemagne. Now the form of this work is not romance but a prose, Latin pseudo-chronicle, a genre which does not lend itself as readily to the topoi we have already discussed. Nevertheless, even in William of Malmesbury's chronicle of 1125, which pre-dates the Geoffrey of Monmouth version, a repetition of Nennius' description of Arthur is amended by "the belief that this hero will return from the fact that no one has seen his tomb."[404] In this context, the Arthur legend is reminiscent of the Alexander romance: a leader who is glorified through conquest -- Nennius' Arthur wins twelve battles; the later Arthur supposedly even conquers Romans -- and who, through death, gains immortality; like Jesus, he is to return one day as "the once and future king". Interestingly, Giraldus Cambrensis in his *Speculum Ecclesiae*, while describing an eye-witness account of the twelfth-century exhumation of Arthur and Guenevere, notes that the belief in Arthur's return from Avalon

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[404]J.D. Bruce, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance,* vol. 1, p. 12.

resembles that "of the Jews in the coming of the Messiah."[405] We shall presently see how Peter Meister elaborates this theory. Bruce further notes that this belief could have been potentially subversive for the Anglo-Norman conquerors of Britain; thus, the mock exhumation of Arthur and Guenevere at Glastonbury -- 1191 -- helped put to rest any hopes of a future overthrow of the Frankish conquerors under the banner of Celtic nationalism.[406]

Bruce notes further classical influence even in the early phase of the pseudo-chronicles. The character of Merlin, for example, is unknown before Geoffrey except for a few Welsh references to a bard by that name. Thus, "he is virtually the creation of Geoffrey."[407] Now a significant motif of the wizard's story is his entrapment by Vivianne; Bruce sees this as a classical rather than a Celtic motif, citing fabliau-like tales where "Aristotle, Hippocrates and Virgil... figure incessantly in these tales as the butt of feminine deceit."[408] Moreover, even in the early Nennius version, the conception of Arthur through the deception of Igerna by Uther is compared by Bruce to the similar deception of Alcmena by Jupiter.[409] One more tantalizing connection is suggested by Saintsbury's mention that the French Alexander romance, whether in its classic alexandrine or octosyllabic and decasyllabic forms, rejects the parentage of Achilles

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[405]J.D. Bruce, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance*, vol. 1, p. 78.

[406]Ibid., p. 264.

[407]Ibid., p. 132.

[408]Ibid., p. 151.

[409]Ibid., p. 135.

through Nectanebus, but the wizard is still present during the youth's formative years.[410] Frappier attributes this suppression to the fact that "la bâtardise d'Alexandre jurait trop avec l'attachement de la noblesse médiévale à la pureté du lignage pour que pareille infame ne fût pas épargnée au héros, alors qu'au temps du Pseudo-Callisthène, [2me s. av. J-C], sa naissance fabuleuse était propre à lui conférer le prestige du surnaturel."[411] Nevertheless, there is a striking parallel between the Nectanebus-Alexander and the Merlin-Arthur relationship.

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The pseudo-historical frame created by Geoffrey and imported to France by Wace in his verse adaptation will become the premise for a series of individual romances, which Bruce attributes to the creativity of their authors much more than to any Celtic source.[412] We shall now see how the authors of these romances could have been inspired by Byzantine sources, and how Byzantium figures in their creations. Likewise, as we shall see, the "common heritage" elements as described by Weston could have been

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[410]George Saintsbury, *The Flourishing of the Romance and the Rise of Allegory*, p. 159. According to P. Meyer, the dodecasyllabic version derives this rejection from the decasyllabic version, but the insistence that Nectanebus 'Al nestre aida l'enfant, coi que nus vous en die"(Mich. 5, 6) suggests that one of the Pseudo-Callisthenes translations was also at hand, most likely the *Epitome Valerii.* (Paul Meyer, *Alexandre le Grand dans la littérature française*, (Slatkine, 1970[1886]), pp. 139-40.)

[411]Jean Frappier, "Romans d'Antiquité", in *Grundriss der Romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters,* p. 154.

[412]J.D. Bruce, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance*, vol. 1, pp. iii-vi.

most readily acquired from their Greco-Byzantine source. In some cases, themes and motifs from late antiquity seem to be carried over by Saints' Lives readily available in Latin translation.

Thus, many romances of the time carry over Greek motifs. We have already noted the *Romans d'Antiquité,* and to these may be added Gauthier d'Arras' *Eracle* and especially *le Bel Inconnu* of Beaujeu, whose plot is reminiscent of the *Apollonius of Tyre.* Even some "Arthurian" works, as we shall see, rely so heavily on the inspiration of contemporary Byzantine contact -- ceremonials, liturgical rites, etc. --, that nothing but a direct borrowing can be an adequate explanation. Nevertheless, although a number of plotlines have a striking parallel in Ancient Greek or Byzantine literature, Bromwich attempts to attribute them to "a common fund of narrative themes... once shared among all Celtic peoples."[413] As we have noted, the possibility of such a source is pure conjecture; moreover, too often the borrowing is so direct that such a theory cannot hold water. The more plausible explanation, even if the improbable Celtic conjecture is to be permitted, is the composition of the romances by French authors from some insular/early Britannic elements combined with late classical/early Byzantine elements imported to the West in the first centuries a.d., and with the fresh knowledge of the culture and literature of the East.

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[413]Rachel Bromwich, "Celtic Elements in Arthurian Romance," p. 51.

6. The Roots of Tristan: Theseus and Paris

An interesting case in point is perhaps the all-time favorite love story, the *Tristan* romance, which may be the a lost composition of Chrétien but survives in its oldest form in a fragment of Thomas (between 1155 and 1170).[414] Bromwich sees in the *Tristan* plot Britonic contributions,[415] but such an origin can easily be dismissed through Bruce's objections: the modesty and the difficulty in dissolving a marriage are clearly non-Celtic, and the depiction of love as well as the sense of tragedy seem more French than Celtic.[416] To this we would object that the sense of tragedy, as well as the specific circumstances, mirror a classical Greek motif, and the love portrayed, though not in its adulterous form, is already a staple of the Hellenistic romance.

Indeed, to anyone except the staunchest supporters of the Celtic theory of origin, the romance seems to be a composite of Greek myths: in the simple story, Tristan slays a monster and saves its human tribute; he thus acquires a bride for his king, Mark. Mistakenly drinking a love potion, however, Isolde and Tristan fall in love with each other. The remainder of the romance involves the clandestine affair, Tristan's departures and returns, and the ultimate tragedy brought about by his failure to change his ship's sail from black to white.

The human tribute to the Morholt, his slaying by Tristan and the black sail which

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[414]J.D. Bruce, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance*, vol. 1. p. 166.

[415]Rachel Bromwich, "Celtic Elements in Arthurian Romance," p. 49.

[416]J.D. Bruce, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance*, pp. 171-3.

mistakenly precipitates the tragedy mirror similar incidents in the Greek myth of Theseus. Also, the slaying of the monster has several counterparts in Greek myth, and Tristan's musical skill is reminiscent of Orpheus. Bruce also sees the love-potion motif as classical.[417] For the balance of the story, critics, particularly Stein, Eisner and Brogsitter, point to the relationship of Paris, Prince of Troy, and Oenone, a nymph, daughter to the river Xanthus. Her power to heal resembles Iseult's; in both cases, the hero dies after having rejected his beloved, Tristan for Iseult of the White hands, Paris for Helen.[418]

Sigmund Eisner's *The Tristan Legend: a Study in Sources* comes to the very plausible conclusion -- despite our reservations about the level of language learning at that time and place -- that the extant Tristan versions must derive from a seventh-century original composed in an Irish monastery where familiar insular nomenclature and knowledge of Greek and Latin language and mythology could coincide. According to Eisner,

> "The tradition within the Irish Columban monastery was one of scholarship. The invasions of the fourth and fifth-century barbarians into western Europe caused many Gaulish scholars to flee to England where they brought a knowledge of the classics, the Latin language and the Greek language... The proper names in the Tristan legend have some association with the North of Britain of about the sixth century... [and] the Tristan legend contains a number of elements reminiscent of... myths...: a. Tristan's character and adventures are similar to the character and adventures of Hippolytus, the tragic hero of the Greek myth of Phaedra,

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[417]J.D. Bruce, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance*, p. 174.

[418]Walther Johannes Stein, *The Death of Merlin*, pp. 201-206. Also see Karl Brogsitter, *Artusepik*, (Stuttgart, 1965) p. 91, and Sigmund Eisner, *The Tristan Legend: a Study in Sources*, (Evanston, 1969), pp. 147-150.

as it was dramatized by Euripides. b. Tristan's adventure with the Morholt is reminiscent of Theseus' conquest of the Minotaur. c. Tristan's death contains elements of the deaths of Aegeus, the father of Theseus, and Paris, the son of the Trojan King Priam. d. Tristan's voyage to Ireland appears to be related to the illness of Philoctetes, a hero associated with the Trojan War."[419]

One critic offers an allegorical explanation for this compound legend. According to Walther Stein, Paris loses his spiritual side when he rejects the nymph for the prospect of a worldly love. His death through an arrow dipped in the poison of the Hydra -- which Stein claims mirrors the nine Muses with its nine heads -- represents reunion with the Spiritual. Thus, he explains the ennoblement of Tristan through his suffering for his beloved Iseult.[420] Through the theme of the alchemy of love, Stein curiously weaves together the elements we have been discussing: mystery cults, Christianity, troubadour poetry and romance. "The love union of two human beings is the reflection in the earthly sphere of the union of the human being with the divine, with the Eternal Feminine, by whom the soul is borne... Sublime love was once sacred to Isis, the deity of the night. Rudolf Steiner indicated how the Isis cult, coming from Egypt and handed down by the Arabs, became the cult of the Madonna when it reached the soil of Spain and France. Then it was secularized and became minstrel poetry."[421]

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[419]Sigmund Eisner, *The Tristan Legend: a Study in Sources,* pp. 159-161.

[420]Walther Johannes Stein, *The Death of Merlin: Arthurian Myth and Alchemy*, pp. 201-206.

[421]Ibid., p. 211. Sigmund Eisner's *The Tristan Legend: a Study in Sources* also deals with possible Oriental motifs which are outside the scope of our current narrative, but which may be explored as potential sources transmitted through Byzantium as intermediary.

the influence of Arabic poetry on Provençal is uncertain, and, the texts translated from Arabic versions of Ancient Greek authors in Spain were philosophical and scientific rather than literary. (In any case, these texts, as we have seen, were originally borrowed from Byzantium.) Like the suggestion of other elements in these stories of ancient borrowings perhaps dating to Roman Gaul and England, the Hispano-Moorish connection is questionable, whereas the presence of Byzantium in the Arthurian works is unmistakable.[422] Finally, Père Delehaye makes one last connection between *Tristan* and the classical tradition as part of the "innumerable examples" of transmission of motifs: "the Irish have thought fit to borrow from King Midas his ass's ears with which to adorn at least two of their kings."[423]

Finally, a last observation should be made with regard to Chrétien de Troyes, the greatest author of original Arthurian romance. As we have noted the Byzantine-Christian roots of his *Guillaume d'Angleterre*, we might also note that one of his early works was supposed to be a lost romance of King Mark and Isolde; whether or not this work retold the complete Tristan story, which is a matter of controversy, our remarks about the origins of the Tristan story suggest one more plausible connection between Chrétien and the Byzantine East.

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[422]As we shall see, Byzantium figures as the homeland of characters and also sometimes the setting for romances; other romances are sprinkled with Byzantine fineries or borrow plot motifs which we shall examine at length.

[423]Hippolyte Delehaye, *The Legends of the Saints*, p. 27.

CHAPTER XIII.

EREC AND ENIDE: CHRETIEN'S ARTHURIAN ROMANCES

1. Originality and Borrowings

To understand the influence of the Byzantine romance on the French, we must consider more closely Chrétien de Troyes' romances, since they are not only the originals in Old French but also the most memorable verse works of the genre. As the late J.D. Bruce remarks, "a German critic happily has said, [Chrétien] makes the impression of a juggler who can shake couplets out of his sleeve as long as he pleases with greater vividness and agreement... than any other poet of the Middle Ages. He has preserved for us... the outward lineaments of the society... The vast forest of medieval Arthurian romance sprang up mainly from the seeds of his sowing."[424] In general, according to Bruce, "The plan and main idea of each romance are his own. He makes up the narrative by combining motifs which he has derived from earlier sources."[425]

Of course Loomis will eventually disagree with these assertions, asserting that too much credit is given to French authors and that motifs earlier attributed to the French romances were available independently in oral form or, altered beyond recognition, in Welsh tales. We have already found that such "scattered remnants" are unsatisfactory to our purpose of understanding the romances as a whole, and, moreover, that tales such as

[424]J.D. Bruce, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance*, vol.1, p. 122.

[425]Ibid., p. 112.

those of the Mabinogion are from the same potential source as Arthurian romance, but they seem further removed from an original source by their often nonsensical imagery. As we confront the mass of recent scholarly commentary on Arthurian origins, we must therefore temper our view of Bruce's comments but be careful not to slip so far away from them as to substitute chaos for logical structure. In any case, even Loomis concedes the popularity of Chrétien's romances, which could account for the adoption of similar themes in other tales. He compares their stature to that of Scott's Waverley Novels in the nineteenth century.[426]

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[426]R.S. Loomis, *The Development of Arthurian Romance*, p. 44. Jean Frappier adds that attributing too much to the imagination of twelfth-century authors is an excuse for not adequately pursuing their sources: "Certains critiques, peut-être découragés par le caractère inextricable, apparemment ou réellement, du noeud des motifs mythiques dans le roman de Chrétien, ont préféré penser que cette matière était entièrement sortie de son imagination. Comme Alexandre tranchant le noeud gordien, toute la difficulté serait ainsi résolue d'un coup, très simplement. Il faut résister à cette tentation. Pour la satisfaction de l'esprit, pour une meillure intelligence aussi de la littérature du Graal, on doit affronter le problème des origines."(p. 297)

This statement turns problematic, however, once Frappier actually attacks this subject. Picking over the sketchy Celtic tales for sources of inspiration, he alludes to Lug's sovereignty cup and bloody lance of destruction, to Bran as another source of the Roi Pécheur: wounded, generous, owning a horn of plenty. As much as he attempts to rob the Grail of its sacred significance and insist on its association with food -- as in the first continuation of the Perceval romance where it circles with each course -- he must eventually admit that "On a là des analogies de motifs plutôt qu'une ressemblance précise entre deux personnages, on doit en convenir."(p. 306) Finding that his scheme cannot explain the meaning of the story or the linking of its elements, he must finally concede what he rejects in other explanations, that "cette façon de nouer les données légendaires est due probablement à Chrétien."(p. 307)

The main weakness of the argument is the staunch refusal to accept the possibility of Chrétien's joining together various Christian details -- provided, as we believe from the Orient, or possibly by Christian monasteries in Britain and Ireland as Eisner suggests for the motifs of the Tristan saga -- whereas he must insist on such combinations in a Celtic explanation. Likewise, he permits obscurity on Chrétien's part only in his use of Celtic sources, rejecting the possibility that Chrétien could have disguised a liturgical procession for the sake of mystery, but while attributing a hidden character -- *voilé* -- to

For our purposes, whether Chrétien drew eclectically on some Celtic themes to spice up and give authenticity to his tales or on the contrary such motifs were his own invention (or borrowed from another source) does not matter as long as we keep sight of his works as a whole, their context in our historical theme, their similarity to earlier works of the genre. Only through such a consideration can we: 1) understand Chrétien's works, 2) see where they fit in the big picture of the romanesque fictional narrative, and 3) appreciate how his creative genius deviated from previous works of the genre. It should be recalled in this respect that there were many playwrights before Shakespeare, and that Shakespeare's *matière* preceeded him as he drew from the unbroken and rich tradition ranging from antiquity to the Renaissance, but this does not lessen his stature, and to this day it can be said without reservation that there was only one genius who could have given his works their present form: there is only one Shakespeare, as there is only one Chrétien.

2. The Romances

Chrétien's first Arthurian romance, *Erec et Enide* (circa 1170)[427], seems to go

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such an obscure reference as the Fisher King's sexual impotence referred to as wounded "parmi les deux hanches."(p. 306) Thus, Christian references must be crystal clear, whereas the Celtic world, in Frappier's scheme, is allowed to be a "domaine obscur qu'on trahit quand on veut s'éclairer jusqu'au fond." (Jean Frappier, "Les romans en vers du graal", in *Grundriss der Romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters*, pp. 297-311.)

[427]Dates for Chrétien's romances are those proposed by David Staines in his recent English translation of Chrétien's works, there indicated as the dates which "scholars now ascribe" to his romances. (David Staines, *The Complete Romances of Chrétien de Troyes*,

contrary to the stereotypical chivalric topos of conventional Old French romances, the relationship unsanctioned by marriage: Eric wins Enide, she receives a kiss from Arthur after a successful stag hunt, and then Erec and Enide experience a series of adventures as a married couple, in Erec's attempt to downplay his neglect of martial pursuits due to his marital bliss. Bruce notes that Chrétien's characterization of Enide, or any of his noble women for that matter, is quite the opposite of that of insular female characters, who, though they "have strength and stature,... [they] amply justify the term *gemein* ('low down')... Indeed, the exploits of some of... them, like Medbh, wife of King Ailill of Connaught, do not bear repetition in modern polite society."[428] From these considerations, Bruce concludes that *Erec and Enide* has very little in common with Celtic legend, except for names and setting. He credits the form and sentiment of the romance, instead, to the Romances of Antiquity.[429]

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p. xii.) It should be noted however, that Willam Kibler's dating, in the most recent Penguin Classics edition is slightly different. Kibler sees a parallel between the description of the court during Enide's coronation in the first romance and Henry II's court during the 1169 betrothal of his third son, thus suggesting 1169 as the date of the first romance. The second romance receives the date of 1176 since the historical events concerning Byzantine and Germanic royal families that seem to be reflected there occur between 1170 and 1175. Kibler then suggests that the following two romances were composed sometime at after that, or between 1177-1179. He is much less precise in dating Perceval, however, suggesting simply that it was begun sometime in the 1180s and never completed. In light of certain historical events, which will be dealt with later, however, we must side with Staines' later dating of this last romance.(See William Kibler, ed., Chrétien de Troyes' *Arthurian Romances*, (Harmondsworth, 1991), pp. 6-9.

[428]J.D. Bruce, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance*, vol. 1, p. 108.

[429]Ibid., pp. 107, 111. Foerster and Frappier also see the Romans d'Antiquité as the source for the form and sentiment of the Arthurian romances.(U.T. Holmes, *Chrétien de Troyes*, p. 67.) According to Frappier, "The romance had already flowered, happy offspring and rival of the epic, corresponding to both a change in attitude and feelings

The *Romans d'Antiquité*, however, stop quite short of portraying the kind of relationship we encounter in *Erec and Enide.* As we have seen, these works praise the noble aim of marriage rather than the immature and risky relationships of amour courtois, but, as Jones points out, although they sometimes give "a coherent picture of a first experience of love",[430] as in the case of Lavinia and Aeneas, these romances, which moralize about the virtue of relationships leading to marriage, do not for the most part dwell on the experiences of married life. Jones notes that "Benoît, like the authors of the other *romans antiques*, is not primarily interested in the psychology of the marriage relationship."[431] In this context, therefore, *Erec and Enide* has much more in common with *Digenis Akritas*, which focuses on the travails that befall him and his spouse, than with any other contemporary piece of literature. This is not surprising, since, according to Bruce, Chrétien "had the usual scholastic education of the time and... he shared the renewed ardor [for]... the study of the classics... [of] learned circles towards the middle of the twelfth century."[432] Such a well-read author, particularly in a period of so much travel and discovery would have to be among the first to hear of and appreciate the works travelers were exposed to. Moreover, we shall see shortly that Chrétien, in his romances,

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among the nobility, to a moral and poetic elevation of woman... and to that complex alloy of elegance, refinement, and psychology of love epitomized by the terms 'courtly' and 'courtliness,' the first 'courtly' romances being those of the 'Cycle of Antiquity,' the *Roman d'Alexandre, Roman de Thèbes, Roman d'Enéas, Roman de Troie....*" (Jean Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes: the Man and his Works*, (Athens, Ohio, 1982), p. xviii.

[430]Rosemarie Jones, *Love in the Romans d'Antiquité,* p. 37.

[431]Ibid., p. 44.

[432]J.D. Bruce, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance*, p. 107.

had a definite interest in Byzantium, and later that his relationship with Philip of Flanders made him especially aware of Crusader culture.

Finally, concerning the opening story of Arthur's hunt for the white stag, Holmes mentions the possibility of a pagan motif,[433] but, as we have seen, stag-hunting was a commonplace -- at first mythological -- which had carried over into the Saints' Lives, and, indeed, figures prominently in the Eustache legend which Chrétien adapts in *Guillaume d'Angleterre*.

Chretién's second Arthurian romance, *Cligès* (circa 1175), goes even further towards the Byzantine model, by shifting the setting to the Byzantine court. After a prologue characteristically ascribing the story to an authoritative source -- from Saint Peter's in Beauvais -- and noting the transfer of knowledge from Greece to Rome and finally to France,[434]

> "Ce nos ont nostre livre apris
> Qu'an Grece ot de chevalerie
> Le premier los et de clergie.
> Puis vint chevalerie a Rome
> Et de la clergie la some,
> Qui or est an France venue,"(28-33)[435]

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[433]U.T. Holmes, *Chrétien de Troyes*, p. 67.

[434]This statement on the transfer of learning, along with the deliberate choice of Byzantine characters in this romance, particularly in the context provided by works such as *Guillaume d'Angleterre*, suggest that Chrétien was consciously interested in the Byzantine world, both in its material and literary aspect.

[435]It is interesting to note that a parallel perception existed in the East; according to Magdalino, "John Geometres positively gloats over the fact that Constantinople has succeeded Athens as the metropolis of learning." (Paul Magdalino, *The Perception of the Past in Twelfth-century Europe*, p. 143.

Chrétien begins by telling the story of Cligès' parents, much like the author of the *Digenis*. Cligès' father is Alexander, prince of Constantinople. He journeys to Britain to be dubbed knight by Arthur, and travels with him to Brittany. On the way, Alexander falls in love with Arthur's niece Soredamors, but they are afraid to confess their love. Arthur must return, for his throne is threatened by a traitorous count, Engers, who has been left as regent. At court, Guenevere senses the feelings of Alexander and Soredamors; Alexander helps Arthur in the siege of Windsor and regains the castle, and Guenevere helps bring the lovers to the altar. Their son is Cligès.

In the meantime the emperor dies in Constantinople, leaving Alis, Alexander's younger brother, on the throne, since Alexander is thought to be dead. Alexander returns, and allows Alis to retain his title provided he actually rules and Cligès inherits the throne. After the couple's death -- Alexander had urged Cligès to test himself against the best knights of Arthur's court -- Alis breaks a promise that he had made never to marry. He abducts the daughter of the German emperor, Fenice, but she and Cligès fall in love. Cligès must defend her against a Saxon prince originally betrothed to her, and Fenice must acquire a magic potion to satisfy Alis' desires without physical consummation of their marriage.

After this Cligès travels to Arthur's court and distinguishes himself in tournaments against the greatest knights: tormented by love, however, he returns to Constantinople to resume the affair with Fenice. She procures a potion which puts her in a death-like trance. She is buried despite the suspicions of three doctors from Salerno, who are thrown out a window and battered by the fall, to insure their silence. Cligès evades the

watch and carries Fenice off to a tower. She recuperates with the aid of a nurse, and they live together for four months, until they are discovered and must flee to Arthur's court. After Alis' death, they return to reign in Constantinople for the rest of their lives.

After our discussion, the alternation of setting between Arthur's court and Constantinople should not be surprising. After all, whereas the world of Arthurian romance and its Brittanic setting is almost make-believe, being a mythical kingdom encompassing Southern England or Northern France, the Byzantine court reflects a tangible experience. Frappier concurs in this evaluation, noting that there is less of a fairy-tale quality and more reality in Cligès than in the other romances of Chrétien. Moreover, "Chrétien probably found the suggestion for the betrothal of a Greek emperor with a German princess in certain historical events like the... plans Fredrick Barbarossa set forth between 1170 and 1174 to negotiate a matrimonial and political alliance with the Greek emperor Manuel Comnenus. Such ingenuous allusions by Chrétien to quite current affairs would not be missed by the well-informed, enlightened audience gathered at the court of Champagne."[436] Needless to say, Manuel's own wedding to a German princess could also have provided a model. If such allusion to contemporary events is deemed plausible in the fiction of Chrétien de Troyes in general, then our later observations on the mysterious Grail episode will be so much the more credible.[437]

Concerning *Cligès*, we must recall that Breton sources for Chrétien are

[436]Jean Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes*, (Athens, Ohio, 1982), p. 83.

[437]And indeed it seems to be so, since Chrétien alludes to a contemporary Saracen leader in *Yvain*.

circumstantial and fragmentary. Bruce argues that if there were any Insular influence on the romances it came from Brittany, but there are no manuscripts of Breton tales extant to support this theory. Loomis is more specific but still uses circumstantial evidence, mentioning the name of Bleheris as a *jongleur* mentioned in romances. Moreover, according to Bruce, "... French sources betray in their nomenclature traces of Breton transmission...". He recalls that thousands of Bretons crossed the channel fleeing Anglo-Saxon invasions, and flourished on the continental side of the channel, and supposes "the wide-ranging activity of Breton story-tellers, conteurs who, speaking French, were welcomed as entertainers wherever that language was understood."[438] On the other hand, the westernized court of Michael Comnenus, whether observed first-hand by Chrétien while accompanying one of his patrons or described to him by Crusaders, must have inspired Chrétien with the idea of this splendid realm where a knight could be at home, in his exotic Eastern surroundings, just as much as in King Arthur's court.

Besides the setting, the protagonists of this romance are Byzantine -- Cligès, in fact, is of mixed race as is Digenis. Moreover, two Byzantine motifs suggest themselves. First, although as Bruce points out *chansons de geste* often inspired the creation of

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[438]J.D. Bruce, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance*, pp. 32-34. Here again, we must caution about the circumstantiality of such assertions. Nevertheless, according to Donovan, many later Middle English poems refer to the Breton works as their inspiration, including Chaucer's "Franklin's Tale":

"Thise olde gentil Britouns in hir dayes
Of diverse aventures maden layes,
Rymeyed in hir firste Briton tongue;
Whiche layes with hir instrumentz they songe,
Or elles redden hem for hir plesaunce,...".

(Mortimer J. Donovan, *The Breton Lay*, p.2.)

"enfances" of the same hero, in this romance the two part narrative, the first half occupied by the parents' story is, as we said, strongly reminiscent of *Digenis Akritas.* The carrying off of Fenice, though by Alis, is also roughly parallel to Digenis' carrying off of his bride. Moreover, the main action of the primary plot, besides the stock jousting scenes inserted into all Arthurian romances, revolves around Fenice's false burial, which leads to the reunion of the lovers, par excellence the central motif of Hellenistic and Byzantine romance. Bruce and others point out that *Cligès* might be considered an anti-Tristan in that the relationship portrayed is a moral and hence ultimately successful one;[439] this is the type of relationship portrayed in the Hellenistic and Byzantine romances, as well as Romances of Antiquity. Moreover U.T. Holmes considers the Byzantine tale of Solomon and Marcolfus as the source for the *Cligès.*[440]

The appearance of Byzantine protagonists is not rare in the Old French romance. Bruce points to *Manuel and Amande*, an Arthurian romance of probably the thirteenth century, which exists only in a 272 line fragment of the fourteenth century. According to Bruce, "the hero, Manuel, is Greek, and after his marriage to Amande, a Spanish princess, at Carduel, in Arthur's presence, he took his bride to Greece to live."[441] Curiously, in this romance, Arthur is thought dead after the fight with the monster

[439]J.D. Bruce, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance*, p. 117. According to Frappier, "Chrétien would have been struck by the similarity in situation to the Tristan -- a nephew in love with his uncle's wife...". (Jean Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes,* p. 83.)

[440]U.T. Holmes, *Chrétien de Troyes,* p. 85.

[441]J.D. Bruce, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance,* vol. 2, p. 295.

cat.[442] He returns to reign for another twenty-five years, but only after the queen has died of grief.

We shall not deal with *Lancelot* (late 1170s), since Chrétien notes that this was a romance whose plot was suggested by his patron, Marie de Champagne, and whose *amour courtois* plot was not much to his taste, which perhaps accounts for the fact that he left it to a scribe to finish under his direction. Suffice it to say that critics find its adventure plot the least satisfying of Chrétien's creations, and that Lancelot is beyond doubt a French creation, whereas others, like Bromwich, attempt to find a Welsh equivalent even for his name. Nevertheless, Bruce notes a possible Christian symbol in the sword bridge sequence;[443] at least in one part "Chrétien's description... appears to have been profoundly influenced by classical and oriental myths concerning the kingdom of the dead."[444] In general, however, the rambling narrative, unfinished by Chrétien, does not confirm to the standards of the Hellenistic romance.

Abandoning this distasteful work,[445] Chrétien was left free to work on *Yvain* (circa 1180), his next romance. Yvain's adventures begin when Calogrenant, another of Arthur's knights, reports his failure in a most peculiar adventure in the Forest of

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[442]A motif which Loomis traces to an Old Welsh fragment.

[443]J.D. Bruce, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance,* vol. 1, p. 204.

[444]Ibid., p. 203.

[445]Lancelot may have been distasteful to Chrétien, but was found to be quite intriguing by later writers of romance who elaborated on the plot in several versions. The liaison between the most perfect knight and the queen captured the imagination of the audience, and other versions included an anonymous *Lancelot* of the same period, a German adaptation, as well as a 13th-century prose version which, through further transformations including Mallory's, would remain a popular story to the present day.

Broceliande: there is a stone with a fountain, and water poured from the fountain onto the stone incites a storm, after which a knight appears to do battle. Leaving King Arthur's court, Yvain passes a giant, monstrous herdsman guarding bulls, reminiscent of Homeric adventures. He pours the water on the stone, has the same experience as Calogrenant, and succeeds in unhorsing the knight and wounding him to death. Finding his way to the knight's castle, Yvain is trapped at the gate until a servant girl who had been to Arthur's court recognizes him. Her name is Lunette, and she gives Yvain a magic ring which, by making him invisible, enables him to observe Laudine, the knight's widow, at the funeral. His subsequent courtship makes him the new defender of the fountain. When Arthur arrives in the forest, Yvain wants to leave the castle for the court, but Laudine consents only if he agrees to return within a year. When he returns, the year has barely expired, and yet Laudine reproaches him to the point that Yvain goes mad. After a number of adventures he comes to the aid of a lion fighting a serpent. The lion becomes his companion, and helps him in his further adventures: rescuing Lunette who is about to be burnt over a false accusation, killing a giant who threatens the four brothers of a damsel he desires, and defeating two sons of a devil who receive as tribute thirty maidens each year from the King of the Isle of Maidens.

Finally, the lion follows Yvain, the incognito *chevalier au lion*, to a duel with Gawain over the inheritance of two sisters; from here, he finally returns and stirs up the storm at the fountain. Lunette must trick her lady into accepting him again by presenting him under his alter ego.

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In this romance, Yvain's quest in the forest, his madness, and the friendly lion all suggest the archetypal Life of symbolic death and resurrection. The adventure is initiated by the tale of Calogrenant's fountain; Elliott likens this to the Thecla romance, where the arrival of another, Paul, precipitates her adventures.[446] The substance of the romance, Yvain's madness and his restitution through a magic ointment, particularly with the presence of the lion, which certainly could not have been present in the Celtic forest, symbolizes a rebirth or resurrection along the lines of Mystery Cults or Saints' Lives.[447] Moreover, "Yvain's acquisition of the lion is a sign of his progressive redemption."[448] In this sense, Yvain is a fable of "paradise regained", of fallen man, out of harmony with nature, regaining, after his rite of passage, eternal harmony and peace: "The hermit... rejecting the civilized life of the polis, and experiencing a symbolic death and burial, reascends into the desert paradise where he lives in peace with beasts."[449] It may be noted that Yvain's deeds before the madness incident are mainly for his own glory, whereas afterwards he renders service to others, particularly by saving lives. Perhaps significant to understanding the roots of the romance is the Pesme Aventure scene, where Yvain and the lion defeat the devils. In perfect synchretistic fashion, the tribute motif

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[446]Allison Elliott, *Roads to Paradise,* p. 83.

[447]Ibid., p. 199.

[448]Ibid., p. 200.

[449]Ibid., p. 167.

from Theseus is blended with the Perseus/St. George vs dragon story -- which is also reminiscent of the giant scene -- and the lion motif from hagiography. And this romance is like so many other romances, whether ancient, Christian or medieval; whether the paradise regained is the love of a spouse, eternal life, or the resumption of sanity, the initiatory transformation follows similar lines.

In support of our thesis, Holmes points to the works of Harris and Bayrav, who note that the presence of a lion and a chapel in the latter part of the story imply a sort of redemption. "Yvain succeeds at first, then fails through lack of Grace of some kind. He acquires this while in the company of the grateful lion...mentioned in the title from his narrative... [which] can be comprehended only in light of Christianity."[450] He also mentions Luria, who, through a theory associating the fountain adventure with baptism, sees in Yvain an allegory of baptism, redemption, backsliding, repentance, penance, and final restoration.[451]

Elliott also remarks a preponderance of miraculous beasts and angels guiding saints through the magical space into which their quest leads them. Antony is guided by a hippocentaur and a she-wolf; Serapion is guided by three angels; Macarius' three monks are aided by a stag and a dove; Macarius by the Archangel Raphael, an ass, a stag and a dragon, the last of these possibly derived from the biblical romance the Book of Tobit.[452] We have also noted the stag in the Eustache legend. Their transfer to the

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[450]U.T. Holmes, *Chrétien de Troyes,* p. 113.

[451]Ibid., p. 114.

[452]Allison Elliott, *Roads to Paradise,* pp. 116-7.

Arthurian romance is obvious in, though not limited to, *Yvain*; in the *Chevalier du Papegau*, "a beast of miraculous appearance guides the hero to a beautiful tree, then transforms itself into a man clad all in white who explains that he is the soul of a slain king."[453] We have already noted the general fascination with this subject found by Westerners in the ecclesiastical literature of the East. One further expression of this fascination, and transfer of the motif, is in the *Chanson de Jérusalem* of the *Crusade Cycle*, where, after Saint George has helped assure the victory, the devil takes the Saracen dead, but, as for the Crusaders,

> "Et .I. lions en ot nos Crestiiens porté
> Trestot l'un avant l'autre mis et amoncelé"(9796-7)

Frappier and Foerster see a variation of the Androcles story by Aulus Gellius in the lion motif,[454] and Holmes sees a reflection of the current events in the Holy Land in the reference to Nur-ed-Din.[455] Finally, we might note one more Hellenistic motif, in Yvain's rescue of Lunette from death at the stake; such rescues are common, of course, in the romances of antiquity, and the reunification scene, involving recognition, at the end, is also typical of Byzantine romance.

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[453]Allison Elliott, *Roads to Paradise*, p. 117n.

[454]U.T. Holmes, *Chrétien de Troyes,* p. 115.

[455]Ibid., pp. 111, 104.

3. Bakhtin's Theories

Before leaving our general discussion of Chrétien's corpus, we might consider for a moment Bakhtin's general observations on chivalric romance, since Chrétien's admittedly self-conscious efforts are considered the best of this genre. Bakhtin notes the similarities between Hellenistic and Chivalric romances, particularly through his concept of time/space in romance, the "chronotrope". According to Bakhtin, the "adventure time" of the chivalric romance is the same as that of the Hellenistic romance: "Time breaks down into a sequence of adventure-fragments, within which it is organized abstractly and technically...We encounter the same simultaneities and disjunctions in time, the same play with distance and proximity, the same retardations."[456] Moreover, the testing of identity, in the chivalric romance through fidelity of love and faith to the chivalric code, has the same importance in the coherence of the narrative, and, in both, change of names, presumed deaths and recognitions play a significant role.[457]

Bakhtin furthermore notes the similar use of Eastern fairy tale motifs, especially enchantment -- as we have noted with the Eustache legend, many motifs passed through Byzantium to reach the West --, in both types of romance. This is true even though in the Greek romance the point of the story is eventually to return to the normal world, whereas in the chivalric romance the world of the supernatural is normal: knights are

[456]M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, (Austin, 1981), p. 151.

[457]We have of course noted, throughout this work, the centrality of this latter motif in the survival of the novelistic genre.

always waiting for the extra-ordinary, for the narrator's 'Suddenly...!'. Perhaps, as Bakhtin thus tries to differentiate these romances, he makes too much of little; he notes, for example, that the over-reaching Fate in the Greek romances is always in the abstract, whereas in the chivalric romances she is represented by fairies and magic. If we include in the Greek romance the Byzantine texts, however, we see frequent personification of Fate, particularly as the God of Love. Next, Bakhtin asserts that the chivalric characters are developed in such a way that they can reappear in several works because of their distinct character, whereas the characters of the Greek romances, who are all similar, are made distinct only by their particular stories, from which they cannot be detached. This feature of chivalric romances, promoting cyclical continuation, as well as the knightly obsession with glory, sets the chivalric romance much closer to the epic for Bakhtin; "All these distinctive features... set it off sharply from the Greek romance...".[458]

It should not be forgotten, however, that the epics par excellence, even in the watered down versions that Benoît de Sainte-Maure and the Western authors had access to, are those of Homer, and that the first synthesis of epic and romance during this period is the *Digenis Akritas*. In any case, according to Bakhtin's definitions, "In its subsequent development the almost epic wholeness and unity characterizing the chronotrope of the miraculous world disintegrates... in the later prose forms of the chivalric romance, in which Greek elements have more force."[459]

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[458]M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 154.

[459]Ibid., p. 155.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE GRAIL CASTLE REVISITED

1. Legends of Salvation

The thousand-year survival of the Eastern Roman Empire in Constantinople after the collapse of Rome occurred through a series of near-miraculous escapes from various invaders: Saracens, Latins, etc. According to legend, on one seventh- century occasion, the Saracens had encircled the city until the intervention of the Virgin Mary turned the tide by converting their leader. She gave him a vision of "a woman of unimaginable brightness, clothed in purple with a powerful host of white-robed men, [who] descend from Heaven, proceed around the walls of the city, and hold up a pallium towards the walls; in its protection, under God's sign, the city remained safe and the enemies' strength dissipated."[460] No, this is not the lost source of the Grail story; a pallium is a cloak, not a vessel, and the woman is the Virgin Mary, not the Grail Maiden. Moreover, the white-clad men are angels, not Grail Knights, and the City is Constantinople, not the Grail Castle or the symbolic New Jerusalem. Nevertheless, this quotation, from the prologue to the *Akathistos Hymnos*, commemorates "the occasion [which] became a festival of thanksgiving to Mary for the deliverance of Constantinople from the Avars in 626 and the sieges of the Arabs in 677 and 717... and which made Constantinople into the bulwark of Christianity without whose protection the West could

[460]Walter Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages*, p. 134.

not have developed...".[461] Interestingly, it was translated by the same Greeks who assisted Hilduin with the original Pseudo-Dionysus translation, and it presents an interesting parallel to the Grail legend, which, as we shall see, also involves salvation, by some theories metaphysical, by others material, as a hope of victory against the Saracens in the Crusades.

Indeed, similar supernatural intervention put the Saracens to flight in the Old French *Crusade Cycle*; we have already mentioned the lance of Longinus allegedly uncovered in Antioch. According to the *Chanson d'Antioche*,

> "La lance dont Dieu fut blessé
> Quand il mourut sur la croix...
> Si vous livrez un combat ou vous la porterez
> En l'honneur du Seigneur vous gagnerez la bataille."[462]

In this context, the lance takes on the supernatural quality of the cross which led Constantine the Great to victory after his vision of the symbol with the words "by this sign you shall conquer", or even the early account of Arthur with a Christian symbol on his shield. This context, linking the lance with warfare, makes the prophecy linking the destruction of Logres to the lance in the Chrétien romance more plausible in a Christian/Byzantine scheme of things. (And this to say nothing of a more cynical account by Rudolph of Caen which divorces the relic from any spiritual significance, considering it nothing more than a "rusty, eroded, old" Saracen spear,[463] obviously a tool to bring

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[461]Walter Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages*, p. 134.

[462]Sainte-Aulaire, ed., *La Chanson d'Antioche*, p. 329.

[463]See Elizabeth Hallam, *Chronicles of the Crusades*, (New York, 1989), pp. 83-84.

destruction to Christians.) Moreover, in the *Chanson de Jérusalem*, more symbolism of salvation through divine intervention occurs, possibly prefiguring the Grail story. As King Godfrey prays in the Holy Sepulchre, a dove lights the candles of the Crusaders, who subsequently follow a religious procession. Holy relics effectuate a Muslim defeat, and, on two occasions, St. George comes down to save the day in the manner of Mary in the Byzantine legend:

> "I est venus Sans Jorges...
> ... et des autres assés
> Plus sont de .xxx.M., blans comme flors de prés."(5978-81)[464]

These preliminary considerations should be kept in mind as we consider Chrétien de Troyes' most baffling romance, the *Story of the Grail*. Having considered the interest in Eastern mysticism and ceremonial in the Latin west, as well as the general pattern of salvation through initiation, we can now attempt to unlock the meaning of this incomplete work by placing it in this context, particularly through Byzantine and Crusader inspiration.

2. *Chrétien's Romance: Celtic and Nature Cult Theories Modified through the Thesis of Translatio Studii and Direct Influence of Christian Mysticism*

Chrétien's last work, the mysterious *Perceval,* remains incomplete, making interpretation of his symbolism and source material difficult if not impossible. Perceval

[464]Nigel Thorp, ed., *La Chanson de Jérusalem*, (Alabama, 1992), p. 174.

is unlike Chrétien's other romances in two significant ways: the strong presence of Christian symbolism and the *bildungsroman* structure, concerning Perceval's upbringing and education. After a prologue praising his patron, Philip of Flanders, for being much more charitable and therefore superior to Alexander the Great (making Christian virtues -- charity, sow and reap, etc. -- the most admirable qualities), Chrétien begins his romance with an innocent, youthful Perceval, protected by his mother from his father's fate through ignorance of the institution of chivalry.

Perceval has his first encounter with knights in the forest; he thinks them supernatural beings, and is frightened.

> Mes cest anseing desdaignerai,
> que ja voir ne m'an seignerai,
> einz ferrai si tot le plus fort
> d'un des javeloz que je port,"(119-122)

he thinks. This might suggest that Chrétien was influenced by the Albigensians, since they thought negatively of the instrument of Christ's passion, refusing to make the sign of the cross but instead taking the matter in his own hands, except that this fleeting thought leaves Perceval, and he goes on

> "Maintenant vers terre se lance
> et dit trestote sa creance
> et orisons que il savoit
> que sa mere apris li avoit."(153-6)

In light of this discovery, his mother must tell him about his family, give him some general advice about courtesy, and about the church:

"uns leus ou an fet le servise
celui qui le ciel et terre fist
et homes et bestes i mist...
une maison bele et saintisme,
plain de cors sainz et de tresors,
s'i sacrefie l'an le cors
Jesucrist, la prophete sainte,
cui GÏu firent honte mainte...".(572-4, 576-80)

It is significant that the mother's advice, representing Perceval's basic moral upbringing, progresses from chivalric deeds and courtesy towards damsels to the most significant acts in a man's life, in his service to God. Here again, as in the prologue, the stage is set for a spiritual drama which is about to be played out.

As Perceval sets off, his mother collapses but he rides on, in an apparent reminiscence of Habrocomes' departure, where both parents collapse to the ground: "ἔκειντο εἰς γῆν ἀθυμοῦντες".[465]

His first adventure underlines his immaturity; misunderstanding his mother's counsel, he forcefully takes a kiss, pies, and a silver goblet of wine from a maiden in a pavilion, which he'd mistaken for a church. Arriving at Carlisle, he sees Kay slap a maiden who had smiled at him; he later vows not to return to the court until this injustice has been avenged. He kills a knight who had stolen Arthur's golden cup, although in an unchivalrous way, with a javelin through the eye, and dons his red armor. After enjoying the hospitality of Gornemant in a castle with a keep and four turrets, and receiving his instruction in lance and sword as well as comportment, he leaves in search of his mother and arrives at a city by the sea where the land is laid waste and the people are gaunt,

[465]Xénophon d'Ephèse, *Les Ephésiaques*, (Paris, 1926), p. 13.

because the city is besieged by Clamadeu, for the sake of a beautiful maiden, Blanchefleur, who will not yield to him. Perceval defends her, enjoying her kisses and caresses:

> "Ensi jurent tote la nuit,
> li uns lez l'autre, boche a boche,
> jusqu'au main que li jorz aproche."(2062-4)

Clamadeu is sent to Arthur as prisoner on Pentecost, Perceval demonstrating his capability in the first two areas of his mother's advice: chivalry and courtesy. As to the third, it shall be the most difficult to attain, and the one around which the conflict of the romance shall center.

At the court, Chrétien describes Kay, in what has to be Eastern-inspired finery. As this recent taste for luxury is mirrored in descriptions of supposedly ancient warriors, so, as we shall see, recent concerns are mirrored in a supposedly ancient romance.

> "Et Kex par mi la sale vint,
> trestoz desafublez, et tint
> an sa main destre un bastonet,
> el chief un chapel de bonet,
> don li chevol estoient blont,
> n'ot plus bel chevalier el mont,
> et fu treciez a une tresce.
> Mes sa biauté et sa proesce
> anpiroient si felon gap.
> Sa cote fu d'un riche drap
> de soie tote coloree;
> ceinz du d'une ceinture ovree,
> don la boclete et tuit li manbre
> estoient d'or, bien m'an remenbre."(2791-2804)

Feeling remorse for abandoning his mother, Perceval leaves Blanchefleur

promising to return; he encounters a procession of monks and nuns, and promises to bring his mother to them or ask for their prayers should she be dead. After riding for a day, he sees a boat on a river where a cliff blocks his way; the fisherman tells him where to find lodging, and he arrives at a tower, none finer here to Beirut, flanked by two turrets. Attendants take his armor, and dress him in a cloak. In the hall, a man dressed in black silk is sitting on a throne, a great fire before him surrounded by four columns. In a scene reminiscent of Liudprand's *Antapodosis,* Perceval is led by two servants, one on each side, to the sovereign. Whereas Michael Porphyrogenitus would not deign to speak except through courtiers, this king is polite, but says he cannot rise because of a wound in his thigh.

The king offers Perceval a sword brought from his niece, one of only three such swords, fated to break at a specific encounter, but finely crafted: the scabbard from Venice, the hilt of Greek or Arab gold:

> "Li ponz de l'espee fu d'or,
> del meillor d'Arrabe ou de Grece."(3150-51)

As they talk, the now famous grail procession follows: an attendant holding a lance, the tip dripping blood down to the hand, two holding candelabras with bright candles, a girl holding in both hands the *graal*, a vessel of gold with jewels, and another carrying a *tailleor*, a small silver tray. As they file through the room, Perceval feels constrained by the advice given him and does not ask about the bright vessel whose light surpassed that of the candelabra, or for whom its nourishment was intended. Nevertheless, he has a presentiment that harm may come from his silence:

"que j'ai oï sovant retraire
que ausi se puet an trop taire
com trop parler, a la foiee."(3237-9)

They wash their hands and sit to dinner at an ivory table with trestles of unaging wood and a white tablecloth; here some critics, including Diverres, confuse the tray of the procession with a tray from which meat is served, but the distinction is important, since the scene distinguishes between the spiritual nourishment offered by the grail and the temporal nourishment of the meal.[466] (Perceval later learns that this nourishment is the eucharist, offered to an old king in the next room.) In the evening, Perceval is served

"dates, figues et noiz mugates
et poires et pomes grenates,
et leituairë an la fin
et gingenbrë alexandrin."(3313-16)

The reader will note that this scene abounds with references to the Mediterranean world of the Byzantine romance: the description of the sword, the court of the king, the procession, and the evening snacks. The argument has been made, by Helen Adolf and Armel Diverres, and will be considered in its place, that the work was composed with the background of the Crusades. This may also account for the description of Blanchefleur's besieged city, and the arrival of a ship to relieve its inhabitants through nourishment

[466]According to Diverres, "Opinion has been divided among scholars as to whether this was so or not, and the most reasoned and stubborn defence of the view that there were two silver dishes was made by Frappier.(1977, 31)" Diverres argues, based on dictionary definitions for *"petit" tailleoir* by Godefroy and Greimas, that "*petit*" means "of little value", thus not a reference to size.(Armel Diverres, *The Grail and the Third Crusade,* p. 55.) This definition, of course, would not make sense in the context of a procession of exaggerated brilliance.

during the siege. If this is the case, and the Grail kingdom represents the kingdom of Jerusalem -- certainly the case has been made, by Waite, for example, that the Grail Knights of other versions resemble the Templars --, then obviously the court of this Latin kingdom, like that of Norman Sicily, would imitate the Court of Constantinople, which was not only the envy of the West, but also technically the overlord of the Crusading knights. This is important to keep in mind when considering interpretations of the Grail Castle scene: Celticists will reject a Byzantine-Christian interpretation on the grounds that the procession takes place in a dining hall instead of a church, but it must be remembered that Byzantium, since Constantine's vision, was under an emperor who was both the religious and temporal leader -- Caesaropapism. Moreover, the palace chapel at Constantinople was connected to the rest of the building. Thus, through the model of the Byzantine court, Chrétien could have conceived of an institution at once religious and secular, which enabled him to show and contrast its two aspects. If the author, therefore, used artistic license to achieve his desired end, there is no reason to accuse him, as does Olschki, of being, if not Pagan, more likely sacrilegious or heretical.[467] But we are getting ahead of ourselves.

In the morning, Perceval is alone in the castle; he leaves and it disappears. By chance he finds his cousin, whose knight has been beheaded. From her he finds out that his mother had died at his departure, and that, had he asked about the *graal,* the king would have been cured of his affliction. Moreover, he is warned not to use his sword, and also told that Trabuchet can mend it if it should break. Riding after her lover's

[467]Leonardo Olchski, *The Grail and its Mysteries*, (Manchester, 1966), p. 13.

murderer, Perceval comes across the girl he'd once wronged, now in misery since her knight believed her unfaithful. Perceval defeats him, tells him the truth, and sends him to Arthur. The king and his knights look for Perceval, and find him contemplating three drops of blood in the snow. As in a fairy tale, or perhaps a Saint's Life, a hawk had bitten a goose on the neck just enough for it to bleed; the color reminded Perceval of "la fresche color... qui est an la face s'amie."(4178-9) He unhorses Sagremor and Kay, hurting the latter, for disturbing his pleasant reverie, thus fulfilling his promise. Finally, Gawain persuades him to join the company. The next day, Perceval is severely reprimanded by a hellish maiden, and told that, through his failure at the Grail Castle, many knights will die and the land laid to waste because the king is not cured. As we shall see, this passage leads some to an anthropological explanation of the romance through Frazer's *Golden Bough*, whereas others look for mythological wastelands and, an Henry Kratz suggests, a "Zauberwort".[468] We shall see, however, that the implication of Christian compassion, consistent with the introduction to the work, along with the Crusader background and the need for leadership against the Saracen threat, could lead to this prospect of loss of life and waste of the land.

Chrétien tells us that Perceval lost the memory of God for five years, during which time he performed various chivalric adventures, sending 50,000 knights to King Arthur. As the Christian theme of sin and redemption is the focal point of this romance, however,

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[468]Kratz cites Hildegard Emmel's Formprobleme des Artusromans und der Graldichtung, where, according to Kratz, "The Laide Pucele does not really have any guilt to accuse Perceval of, Emmel contends, as the question Perceval failed to ask was a mere *Zauberwort*, lacking ethical or religious meaning." (Henry Kratz, *Wolfram von Eschenbach's Parzival: An Attempt at a Total Evaluation*, (Bern, 1973) p. 140.)

Chrétien is not interested in these five years, and glosses over them, filling space with Gawain's adventures. We meet Perceval again five years later, as he rides along in his armor, having forgotten that this is not the proper practice on Good Friday. Reminded in detail of the meaning of Good Friday by a group of penitents -- which provides the second occasion in the work for Chrétien to condemn the Jews as murderers of Jesus who should be killed like dogs --, Perceval is directed to a hermit who turns out to be his uncle. The hermit explains his failure in terms of sin and redemption: his sin was abandoning his mother, and he would have died of it had she not prayed on his behalf. He also tells Perceval that his mother, himself, and the old king served the Host by the Grail were all siblings. As penance, the hermit prescribes charity, church-going, and a very potent prayer, to be used only in times of great danger, reminiscent of Pseudo-Dionysus, with "many of the names of Our Lord." On Easter, having repented, Perceval receives communion with a pure heart.

At this point, Gawain's adventures resume, and the romance ends with an incomplete sentence. We are left to surmise that 1) the adventure of the broken and mended sword and possibly revenge for his cousin takes place; 2) Perceval is reunited with Blanchefleur, whose memory is preserved by the drops of blood in the snow and 3) the great scheme of sin and redemption is completed by Perceval's return to the Grail Castle, his show of concern, and possibly his inheritance of its kingdom as kinsman and initiate.

Curiously, Helen Laurie suggests: "Did Chrétien not intend for Perceval a journey

to paradise in a transformation of Alexander's journey...?"[469] This comment, in light of Paulette Duval's recent interpretation of the grail romance as "roman initiatique de résurrection et d'extase mystique" and Albert Pauphilet's view seconded by Harry F. Williams, of the work as it stands as "a failed resurrection", clearly fit into the scheme of the romance as it developed in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages.[470] As to whether Chrétien could have completed this plan under the historical circumstances or voluntarily abandoned it, or whether, as is commonly believed, he died before doing so, shall be presently considered.

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As Jean Frappier has pointed out, there are generally three theories, in infinite variations, of the origin of the Grail material: 1) the nature/fertility cult theory, 2) the Byzantine/Christian theory, and 3) the Celtic theory. As we shall see, the three need not necessarily be exclusive if certain elements can be accepted as passing from one of these domains to another. Nevertheless, as we shall conclude, the third of these possibilities is too hypothetical to be of real value.

As has already been suggested, there are some strange, magical elements to the story that appear to be Celtic in origin, but, as Weston has noted, no prototype story

[469]Helen Laurie, *The Making of Romance*, (Geneva, 1990), p. 93.

[470]In Harry F. Williams, "Interpretations of the *Conte del graal* and their Critical Reaction," pp. 148-151.

exists with a wasteland, a Fisherking, a hidden castle, a solemn feast, a mysterious feeding vessel, a bleeding lance and a cup, much less the story of the Grail or of Joseph of Arimathea, in either Celtic or Christian mythology.[471] Her conclusion from this is the basis of the story on Nature Cults, but the suggestion that such primitive elements may have been absorbed directly into the romance is a bit far-fetched: although, as we shall demonstrate, primitive cult elements filtered into Medieval literature in Christianized form, it is unlikely that the memory of a pure Nature Cult could have survived the lapse of nearly a millennium.

As to the Celtic theory, Bruce notes that the wasteland, and particularly the horn of plenty motif associated with the Grail are of late origin, in the Pseudo-Wauchier continuation of Chrétien. Moreover, "No one has yet brought forward a folk-tale, Celtic or otherwise, corresponding in incident and setting to the Grail story. Parallels (not very satisfactory in themselves) to the individual features of it have to be collected from widely separated sources... of uncertain date...".[472] Indeed, it appears that the Grail provides nourishment in the Pseudo-Wauchier, but to suggest that this was its original purpose would be to vulgarize what was intended to be a sacred vessel -- according to the hermit's explanation. Thus, one would miss the distinction between spiritual and temporal nourishment, which appears to be the purpose of its appearance. Frappier, who is convinced that the Grail is nothing more than a copy of Celtic "coupes, plats, corbeilles, cornes à boire, écuelles, chaudrons d'abondance qui possèdent... la vertu

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[471]Jessie Weston, *From Ritual to Romance,* pp. 2-3.

[472]J.D. Bruce, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance*, p. 275.

magique de dispenser boisson et nourriture," sees nothing wrong in this case with using Pseudo-Wauchier -- or Wolfram for that matter -- to illuminate Chrétien, since adherents to the Christian theory allegedly do likewise to prove their thesis.[473] We must caution, however, that insights and misinterpretations by continuators ought not carry the same weight. According to Klenke, "if one starts with a false premise, (as Celticist scholars have done consistently through the years,) no amount of learned footnotes, not even the consultation of half a hundred books and shorter treatises, can prove the false premise to be true."[474]

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[473]Jean Frappier, *Chrétien et le Conte du Graal*, pp. 182, 188.

[474]Amelia Klenke, *Chrétien de Troyes and the Conte del Graal: A Study of Sources and Symbolism*, (Madrid, 1981), p. xvi. Having cited this controversial work, we ought not give the impression that we agree with its conclusions without reservation. As Norris J. Lacy has pointed out, Sister Klenke's book begins with the assumption that the reader is already familiar with the derivation of her thesis from her earlier works, and offers without much explanation "the following equivalences: Grail Castle = Temple of Solomon; Grail = chalice of the Last Supper; attack on Belrepeire = the Roman persecution of the Church... Blanchefleur = St. Agnes... [equation] of Perceval with Paul... on p. 3,... Gornemant, as Perceval's teacher,... represent[s] Gamaliel."(Norris Lacy in *French Review* 56(1988) pp. 475-6.)

Although through imaginative speculation such analogies may be arrived at, and may help to illustrate the theme of religious conversion in the romance, they can certainly not be accepted as the direct, allegorical representations intended or implied in the text and, as we have seen and will see, many more convincing schemes of symbolic representation have been offered by other critics. Moreover, Klenke's dogmatic rejection of the Celtic thesis does not help her case, and in fact "compromis[es] ... her plea for an open-minded approach to research."(Lacy, p. 476) If we arrive at a similar rejection of the Celtic thesis, it is not from an *a priori* adoption of a Christian model, but rather from an *a posteriori* conclusion based on the historical study we have undertaken. As we have stated in numerous places in this work, the transfer of knowledge from the Helleno-Byzantine world to the Latin world of the Middle Ages suggests a plausible explanation as to the origin of the motifs in the Perceval. This conclusion is only arrived at at the end of our historical journey, and, as a possibility, it does not exclude other possible explanations. It does suggest one hypothesis, which appears to be substantiated by history. At the very least, we can agree with both Klenke and Lacy "that scholars cannot

As to the Nature Cult theory, an archetypal version of the beliefs is suggested by Frazer's *The Golden Bough.* As Waldron summarizes, "The King of the Wood in the grove of Diana was invested with the powers which controlled the fertility and thus the continuity of living beings. These powers were magical... A divine king, such as the King of the Wood, possesses a soul which is an incarnation of the supernatural; his body must therefore be a perfect receptacle. When the divine king becomes maimed or debilitated, senile or impotent, the soul's powers are numbed and all life is in danger. Hence the king must now be killed or otherwise removed from the throne, and his place taken by a perfect youth, just as spring follows winter, so that the seasonal cycles may continue, crops may grow, and the perpetuation of life may be ensured."[475]

Although, as we have suggested above, some unsuccessful attempts have been made to credit Welsh ingenuity with the Perceval story,[476] the Nature Cult element, if present, could most logically have entered the romance, without the conscious realization of the author, through one of the avenues that we have been exploring: Saints' Lives or Byzantine versions of Ancient romances.

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afford to ignore the cultural context in which a work is written."(Lacy, p. 476.) We can thus take Frappier's statement, "Ce schéma conjectural serait-il sans aucun fondement, il n'en resterait pas moins que la théorie celtique, à défaut de tout expliquer, peut faire état de parallélismes entre la mythologie celtique et les principaux motifs de la légende du Graal,"(*Grundriss* 4:307-8) and, substituting Christian for Celtic, make it through our historical perspective, even more valid.

[475]Sidney Waldron, "Introduction", in J.G. Frazer, *Adonis, Attis and Osiris*, (New Hyde Park, 1961), p. v.

[476]His name is linked to Peredur of the *Mabinogion,* whose story does not appear to be older than Perceval; Bruce notes that "The author shows no knowledge of anything concerning Perceval which is not in Chrétien. His account of Perceval ends where Chrétien's ends."(J.D. Bruce, *The Evolution of the Arthurian Romance*, vol. 1, p. 349.)

As we noted above, the Nature Cult element figured prominently in the Ancient romances. Waldron notes that sophisticated religions, such as those of the Hellenistic Age, transferred the power of the king or god to a being -- Attis, Osiris, or Adonis -- that controlled fertility within the framework of a hierarchy of gods. These beings received the sacrifices during harvest rituals to insure success of the crops. Waldron continues: "The planting of seeds, the growing of plants, harvesting of crops, followed by another cycle initiated by another planting, symbolized the death and resurrection of these gods, the knowledge of which gave proof of a world after death. These gods were represented on earth by divine kings... Pharaoh was the god Horus, son of Osiris."[477]

In an altered form, these beliefs passed into the Saints' Lives. Elliott, in fact, notes that Saint Onuphrius, a Coptic hermit, was associated with Osiris, as one of the latter deity's titles was Ounnofer, or "the good one".[478] The context of the Grail legend, however, seems to make a Byzantine borrowing more likely: as Weston has pointed out, the story of the wounded king whose land is laid to waste until he can be restored bears some similarity with the Adonis legend, popular at the time of the Ancient romance. In Chrétien's grail story, Perceval arrives at the Castle of the Fisher King and witnesses a mysterious procession which includes a lance and the Grail, presumably a cup.[479] This

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[477]Sidney Waldron, "Introduction", in J.G. Frazer, *Adonis, Attis and Osiris*, p. v.

[478]Allison Elliott, *Roads to Paradise,* pp. 12-13.

[479]Kahane believes that the Grail is derived from the "krater" of the fourth treatise of the Hermetic mystery religion, which also offers a parallel trajectory of initiation and redemption: ignorance, selection, revelation, penitence, and rebirth. He studies Wolfram's version of the story for specific allusions to Hermetism, which he believes may have come through Arabic texts to his mythical source "Kyot", and even attributes the flatness of Wolfram's Grail to the comparison of the "Krater" to a "loadstone" in the

procession is reminiscent of a Greek Orthodox liturgy and Byzantine ceremonial, where the "great entrance" includes candelabra, a chalice, a paten, and the priest's ceremonial knife; this would be the symbolic link between the Pagan world of the story's origins and the Christian world of the Grail romance.[480]

Fourth Treatise. He concludes, however, that "the close kinship of [the]... doctrines [of Hermetism and Christianity] made it possible for Wolfram to transpose the Hermetic story easily into an ostensibly Christian one." Although such conjectures cannot be dismissed outright, we must point out once again that Christianity absorbed a number of mystery cult practices, so that it is not necessary to make anthropologists of our twelfth and thirteenth-century authors to account for these motifs in their works.(Henry and Renée Kahane, *Romanica Scripta Selecta*, vol. 2, pp. 169-175.)

[480]One objection to this theory is that the grail is actually carried by a maiden, an unlikely feature in the Byzantine mass. This problem is simply bypassed by pointing out that the reason for using boys in the Byzantine mass is that girls would not be allowed at the altar of a church. This is not a problem since the grail procession takes place in a castle rather than a church. It has been pointed out, moreover, that in a communion for the sick -- a function more closely related to the serving of spiritual nourishment to the older king in the hidden room -- a woman may hold a communion vessel. According to Frappier, Mario Roques also offers an alternate explanation: the figures in the grail procession are symbolic, the grail maiden representing "Ecclesia" -- the Christian church, as might be suggested by a number of pictorial representations from the twelfth century including the *Hortus deliciarum* miniature, where Longinus holds his weapon, the radiant Ecclesia holds a cup to gather Christ's blood from the cross, and Synagoga, the old, outdated religion, is blindfolded. (Jean Frappier, "Les romans en vers du Graal," in *Grundriss der Romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters,* p. 301.)

Jean Frappier cites this explanation, but is bothered by trifling details: the grail maiden wears no crown, she holds the grail in *both* hands, and the grail contains only a solid host -- no blood. In a true stretch of the imagination, he proposes instead that the grail maiden might be the equivalent of a figure named the "Sovereignty of Ireland", on the basis that a hideous damsel appears later in the story. There is no indication in the text that the grail maiden and the hideous damsel are in any way related, but Frappier speculates that the two so disparate figures are one and the same, because the Irish figure had the power to appear at times radiant and at other times as a hideous witch: "au centre du cortège elle porterait 'entre ses deux mains' un talisman royal d'abondance et de souveraineté, en s'apparentant, lointainement, à la figure mythique de la Souveraineté d'Irlande, dont le double aspect était tantôt celui d'une radieuse jeune fille et tantôt celui d'une monstreuse sorcière. En admettant que cette parenté soit vraie, la demoiselle hideuse, si bien renseignée sur Perceval, ne serait autre que la demoiselle au

The Greek liturgy celebrates the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, consumed by believers for their personal salvation: remission of sins and everlasting life. Inherent in the ceremony is the belief in a Divine Intercessor responsible for the well-being of the people, and moreover the symbols, the body and blood, are in fact nothing less than the fruits of the land, bread and wine, with their terrestrial life-giving properties. This is the most plausible direct source of the Grail legend, the Fisher King symbolizing Christ the Savior, and the cup his Body and Blood, which are also the fruits of the earth. In a more removed phase, the savior may have been Osiris; as Waldron notes, sowing of seeds was symbolic of his dismemberment, and the life-giving green shoots of spring, symbolic of his resurrection, inspiring the belief that he died that men might live.[481]

But what could be the role of Perceval in such a scheme? Perceval is the seeker whose quest leads him to the Holy Grail, and in this way parallels the Christian in search of faith and salvation. We may even go as far as to suggest that Chrétien clearly intended Perceval to achieve his goal -- the believer's communion with God -- as he is wrapped in a red cloak at his arrival at the castle -- a cloak reminiscent of the one Christ was

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graal...".(Frappier, p. 307)

This is typical of Jean Frappier's reasoning, since he objects to the "graal" -- defined as "scutella lata et aliquantulum profunda" -- being a communion vessel because of its shape, whereas he sees no contradiction in his reasoning to make of it a cup, horn, plate, basket, or cauldron of plenty, none of which would fit his narrow description of the shape of the object. Likewise, if Chrétien ingenuously masks his Christian source, Frappier calls it an unlikely game of "cache-cache", whereas if Celtic sources must be twisted to fit Chrétien, it is Chrétien who plays "en artiste et en poète le jeu de l'ambiguité."(Frappier, p. 310).

[481]Sidney Waldron, "Introduction", in J.G. Frazer, *Adonis, Attis and Osiris*, p. viii.

dressed in before he underwent his trials. Jean Frappier comes close to this interpretation in acknowledging the spritual nature of Perceval's quest: "The growth of Perceval falls into three stages. The first is an apprenticeship in the accomplishments and virtues of chivalry but remains incomplete through an error in judgement in failing to ask the fateful question. The second is a moral drama, and it reaches its climax when Perceval asserts his liberty of choice, and, though the Loathly Damsel has predicted failure, sets out to undo the wrong he has done. The third is a spiritual experience, represented by a slowly dawning conscience in relation to his mother's suffering and death, a glimmering awareness of divine mysteries roused by the vision of the Grail, and a full illumination and purification appropriately timed at the Paschal season." Still, adhering to the Celtic thesis -- particularly in a volume edited by Loomis -- he continues: Chrétien "allowed the paganism of a very old myth to remain but created around it an atmosphere of Christian spirituality."[482]

We cannot discount the possibility that, in an earlier scheme, Perceval may have symbolized Frazer's new king, the Grail being a parallel for the Golden Bough. According to Frazier's myth, after a period of inverted morals, promiscuity and sexual frenzy, normal conditions would return when "The divine power was transferred from the realm of the supernatural when the king-to-be entered the sacred grove and plucked a golden bough from one of the trees, which was a vegetative manifestation of the powers of fertility."[483] As we have stated, however, despite Chrétien's subtlety, deliberate

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[482]In R.S. Loomis, ed. *The Arthurian Legend in the Middle Ages,* p. 190.

[483]Sidney Waldron, "Introduction," in J.G. Frazer, *Adonis, Attis, and Osiris*, p. vi.

obscurity, ignorance, or intention to create suspense -- Bruce notes that the Perceval romance typically begins *in medias res*, a technique which he uses, as did his predecessor Heliodorus, to create suspense and Frappier suggests that "his refusal to make everything clear, especially in connexion with the Grail King, his father, the Grail maiden, her office, and the question test, was deliberate... is it not likely that Chrétien realized that much of the charm of his recital lay in the tantalizing concealments and partial mysteries?"[484] --, what we have in the Grail is a Christian legend, its description following most closely Greek Orthodox objects. (Bruce notes that the Fisher King is nourished by the "oiste" contained in the Grail, an obvious reference to the sacrament in the ceremonial chalice.)[485] As to the actual origin of the word "Grail", Bruce summarizes: "According to some philologists, it is derived from an hypothetical Low Latin word, cratalis, which in turn, was derived from the Greek crater (bowl). According to others it is derived from a Low Latin gradalis or gradale, which is actually recorded... in the early part of the thirteenth century in the Chronicle of Helinand of Froidmont in the passage where he alludes to the Grail romances."[486]

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[484]In R. S. Loomis, *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages*, p. 190.

[485]J.D. Bruce, *The Evlolution of the Arthurian Romance*, p. 256.

[486]Ibid., p. 254. Certain critics like Frappier want to see the grail as "flat, wide and hollow", indeed as in the Pseudo-Wauchier, "wide enough to allow a boar's head to be brazed upon it."(Jean Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes,* p. 140.) This, although it has been pointed out, particularly by U.T. Holmes that, even as a container for terrestrial nourishment, a "graal" would be rather a deep dish: "for Heliandus, a grail is a rich [ceremonial] vessel -- somewhat deep and wide... There is no association with a 'flat platter' as some scholars have insisted, while using this very text [without] most of its meaningful description."(U.T. Holmes, *Chrétien de Troyes,* pp. 165-6.) We must add, from Holmes, that the passage in question in Helinand is in relation to "a deep vessel [catinus] in which the Lord supped with his disciples." Amelia Klenke adds more

Byzantium is the logical source for this material. As Bruce states, "Indeed, the various objects in the Grail procession [the bleeding lance, Longinus' "loghe" transformed into the priest's ceremonial knife, the Grail as the cup of the sacrament and the tray -- the "tailleor" according to Bruce symbolizes the paten on which communion bread is cut[487] -- all figure in the ceremonial of the Byzantine mass, and, accordingly, the most eminent advocates of the Christian origin of the Grail... take this as the model of Chrétien's procession. There was... constant intercourse between Constantinople and the West in the twelfth century -- especially owing to the conditions which the crusades produced..."[488] Bruce points out, furthermore, that in the East it was not unusual that

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recently that Jean Misrahi's definition of "Holy Grail" for the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* seems to be plagiarized from the 1910 version by Arthur Remy, except that he purposely suppresses the portion that attempts to explain the significance of the Grail: "[In Chrétien's poem] it is a precious vessel resplendent as to eclipse the lights of the hall. All the assembled knights show it reverence... In the Early History versions it is invested with the greatest sanctity. It is explained as the dish from which Christ ate the Paschal lamb with his disciples, which passed into the possession of Joseph of Arimathea and was used by him to gather the Precious Blood of our Saviour, when His body was taken from the Cross. It becomes identified with the Chalice of the Eucharist." (Amelia Klenke, *Chrétien de Troyes and the Conte del Graal*, pp. 37-8.)

On the basis of Chrétien's description of a jeweled object containing a host, it seems that this observation is on the right track. We should note that the shape of a "chalice" is not quite fixed in the twelfth century, and this definition, associating the chalice with a Last Supper bowl, is at the very least a good way to sidestep the entire issue of shape, as long as the appreciation of the grail's symbolic significance is respected.

An alternate derivation of "graal" may be from the Hermetic "krater," as suggested by Kahane. (See Henry and Renée Kahane, "The Krater and the Grail, in *Graeca et Romanica Scripta Selecta,* vol. 2, pp. 169-174.)

[487]J.D. Bruce, *The Evolution of the Arthurian Romance*, p. 238.

[488]Ibid., pp. 257-258.

a woman should bear the host, and this custom was transmitted to Britain and Ireland.[489] Thus, the fact that the Grail is carried by a maiden does not affect our interpretation, although later romances would substitute males to be on the safe side. Moreover, the title "Fisher" for Christ appears frequently in the early church, especially in the East, where Christ's title of Savior and Son of God abbreviates to ICTHYS.[490] This Christian interpretation of the Grail is clearly supported by the fact that subsequent authors of the 13th century, in the bulk of their Arthurian romances, will give a Christian interpretation to the Grail legend.

As we have already noted, Jean Frappier, has attempted to combine Celtic and Christian elements to produce a compromise interpretation; he points to the obvious Christian overtones in the work, but then presents the fragments of Celtic lore that seem to correspond, individually, to the lance, the maimed king with a horn of plenty, etc. Finally, from a reference made by the hermit, Frappier gets the impression that the Grail, which, as we noted he sees as a very flat dish, and which we argued may correspond to a dish of the Last Supper rather than a communion chalice, must have originally, in a pagan version, have contained fish as the nourishment of the old king, and that Chrétien changed it to a host to give Christian coloring to the passage. Thus, when the Graal contains no "pike, lamprey or salmon",[491] Chrétien has made a conscious change from a supposed source.

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[489]J.D. Bruce, *The Evolution of the Arthurian Romance*, p. 259.

[490]Ibid., p. 261.

[491]Jean Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes*, p. 152.

We must ask, however, what would be the sense of a story where a spiritual being is nourished by fish, if the story is separated from Christian tradition?[492] But we do not have to search in vain for a projected obscure legend of a fish-eating spiritual being. According to Burdach, fish imagery was very common in the early church, since, as in the Gospel of John, the multiplication of the loaves and fishes was associated with the later spiritual nourishment of the eucharist. Burdach cites several examples of catacomb art where such symbolism is evident, and the oldest is from the middle of the second century A.D., the Lucina crypt of St. Callisto: "zweimal das Bild eines Fisches, vor... dem ein Korb mit fünf oder sechs Broten steht, durch dessen Geflecht ein mit rotem Wein gefulltes Gefäβ durch schimmert."[493] Burdach explains:

> "Jesu Wunder der Brot- und Fishvermehrung zur Speisung der Fünftausend... sowie des auf- erstadenen Heilands wunderbare Mahlzeit mit sieben Jüngern am Tiberias-See werden... zweifellos absichtlich, in eine symbolische oder vielmehr mystische Verbindung oder Parallele gestellt mit den Elementen des Abendmahls, gelegentlich auch eines Mahls des Sehligen im himmlischen Paradies. Jesu Gleichnisrede im vierten Evangelium unmittelbar nach der Brot-und Fishvermehrung zur Speisung der Menge und mit Beziehung auf sie war darin vorangesaugen."[494]

Any reference to fish, therefore, must be seen in this context: the hermit's comment on the superiority of the host to fish must be seen as a comparison of the temporal nourishment of the multiplied food to the higher nourishment of the Eucharist,

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[492]Klenke cites Riquer, who insists that *"Li Contes del Graal* est un roman essentiellement chrétien, dans lequel entrent en jeu des éléments chrétiens parfaitement identifiables, et qui s'harmonisent fort bien avec la mentalité, la culture et les croyances de la France de la fin du XIIe siècle qui l'a vu naître." (In Amelia Klenke, *Chrétien de Troyes and the Conte del Graal*, p. 41.)

[493]Konrad Burdach, *Der Gral,* (Stuttgart, 1938), p. 22.

[494]Ibid., pp. 21-22.

in much the same way as John the Baptist's baptism was one of water as Christ's was to be that of the Holy Spirit. Thus, any interpretation that does not take the sense of the story into account can never put the imagery of the romance in proper perspective. Chrétien, moreover, is rather clear as to the source of his inspiration when he discusses the concept of *translatio studii*, where he sees France as the inheritor of the literary wealth not of Britain but of Greece.

"Qu'an Grece ot de chevalerie
Le premier los et de clergie.
Puis vint chevalerie a Rome
Et de la clergie la some,
Qui or est an France venue."(28-33)

As to Frappier's further objections over details in his last book on the Grail myth, particularly about the location of the grail procession in a castle,[495] we have already noted the potential source of inspiration that would not require a compromise between the two usual explanations, as he notes, of the procession 1) in a church or 2) as a "communion de malade", both of which he feels would be rendered sacrilegious by the passing, back and forth, through a banquet hall. Moreover, the combination of Crusader and Byzantine background answers the question of the length of the lance as opposed to the priest's symbolic knife; as we have seen, the grail itself is defined as a rather deep container, so certainly not flat as he argues. Moreover, Chrétien explains that it

"de fin or esmeré estoit;
pierres precïeuses avoit
el graal de maintes menieres,

[495] Jean Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes et le mythe du graal*, (Paris, 1979), p. 165.

des plus riches et des plus chieres
qui an mer ne an terre soient."(3221-5)

It is unlikely that he could be referring to a dish for serving boars' heads. Finally, to explain away the preponderance of Christian elements, transposed to the romance setting, Frappier must opt for a partial Christianization of a Celtic tradition, admittedly "une tradition mutilée".[496] It is difficult to believe, however, that Chrétien would deliberately pave over pagan motifs when the tendency of the age was just the opposite. Byzantine authors, for instance, set their romances in the distant past and re-created the pagan milieu for effect. Indeed, why would Chrétien need to dig into obscure and forgotten tales when Frappier himself concedes: "Il n'y a aucune invraisemblance à supposer qu'un voyageur... ait raconté à notre auteur la cérémonie de la Grande Entrée, ou... qu'il en ait trouvé la description dans un livre peut-être orné de figures explicatrices."[497]

3. Further Objections to Weston and Other Theories

At this point we ought to deal with the objections posed by Jesse Weston, who insists on dismissing the Christian element in the transmission of the death and resurrection symbolism of the Grail legend, and prefers to credit direct borrowing from some obscure Pagan debris still floating in the environment during the eight-hundred-year period between the disappearance of Pagan mystery cults and Chrétien's time. Her first

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[496]Jean Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes et le mythe du graal*, (Paris, 1979), p. 163.

[497]Ibid., p. 170.

point is distinctly unpersuasive: that the symbolism of the lance and cup could not have come from the Orthodox liturgy because the "lance" of the liturgy, which symbolically pierces the host, is actually a small knife: "It seems obvious, from the method of employment, that an actual spear could hardly have been used; it would have been an impossibly unwieldly instrument for the purpose."[498] Needless to say, the length of the "lance" is irrelevant to its symbolism, except perhaps in the phallic context of her theoretical twelfth-century fertility cult. Later, she attempts to dismiss the symbolism of the "Fisher King" name as more in line with some pagan rite than with Christianity,[499] where only a vague association is present, in the symbol ICHTHYS for Christ. Actually fish symbolism abounds: not only in the ceremonial meal which she ascribes to pagan sources,[500] but in the miracle of the multiplication of loaves and fishes, and, most importantly, in Christ, who is referred to as the "King" and whose followers are mostly fishermen. Weston further destroys her own argument by pointing out the connection of symbolism of fish and dove in versions such as the *Vulgate* and *Parzival*. By attempting to attribute such symbolism to an arcane source, and suggesting possible earlier sources for such a connection, she misses the obvious accretion of the Christian element in the romances, the dove obviously symbolizing the Holy Spirit, as such linked with the fish, symbol of Christ. In the end, she is forced to modify her thesis and accept: "That

[498]Jessie Weston, *From Ritual to Romance,* 67-8. Of course, Jean Frappier later picks up on this same point, but his argument lacks the phallic overtones of Weston's concerns.

[499]Ibid., ch. 9.

[500]Although ceremonial meals are also prevalent in Christianity, beginning obviously with the Last Supper, and preserving traditions such as eating fish on Palm Sunday in the Orthodox Church.

Christianity might have borrowed from previously existing cults... may be, perforce has had to be, more or less grudgingly admitted."[501] Still, she insists that any Christian elements brought to the story through the Crusades and/or the bringing back of relics from the East are late additions to a story originally composed on the basis of direct influence from mystery cults imported to the West.

The main problem with this theory is that these cults not only flourished but died in antiquity, whereas the Orthodox tradition remains unbroken in Byzantium and is once more easily accessible to Crusading westerners. Although Robert de Clari did not visit Constantinople until the Fourth Crusade, perhaps fifteen years after the composition of Chrétien's Perceval, if Chrétien belonged to Philip of Flander's retinue in the third, or heard about Alienor of Aquitaine's experiences during the second, he could have been exposed to the same Greek Orthodox church rituals as Robert. Moreover, he could have encountered the treasures that Robert describes as belonging to the churches of Constantinople. In particular, Robert marvels at the splendid palace of Boukoleon, which he loosely translates as "Lion's Mouth", with its five hundred interconnected rooms and golden mosaics, and thirty chapels with columns of precious stones, white marble floors, and doors and hinges of precious silver. In one of these, he claims, were

> "Two pieces of the True Cross, as thick as a man's leg and a fathom in length. And there was found the lance wherewith Our Lord had His side pierced, and the two nails that were driven through the midst of His hands and through the midst of His feet. And there was also found in a crystal phial, a great part of His blood. And there was found the tunic that He wore, which was stripped from Him when He had been led to the Mount of Calvary. And there, too, was found the blessed crown wherewith He

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[501]Jessie Weston, *From Ritual to Romance*, p. 141.

> was crowned, which was wrought of sea rushes, sharp as dagger blades. There also was found the raiment of Our Lady, and the head of my Lord Saint John the Baptist and so many other precious relics...".[502]

Indeed, among this mass of relics is a direct association of a lance and a container of Christ's blood. Robert, however, neglects to mention the most striking relic in the chapel, to which he then dedicates an entire chapter: "there were two rich vessels of gold which hung... in the midst of the chapel by two great chains of silver."[503] Robert tells the story of these vessels: once, a holy man was helping a widow repair the tiles of her roof; Christ appeared to him and wiped His face on his towel. The towel, as well as the tile under which it was kept the first night, received the imprint of Christ's face. Both relics had healing powers, and were kept in the two vessels. Thus, for a Crusading writer, a direct vision of a vessel with the mysterious power of healing was available: whether the relic with Christ's imprint, or the Holy Communion cup which offers salvation to believers.

Weston admits that the last remnants of the Attis and Mithra cults that she can trace in the Alps and the Vosges bring her up only to the 5th century. By a leap of faith, or at best unscholarly interpolation, she suggests that the rites of these cults were... "... handed on in the families of those who had been, perhaps still were, officiants of these rites,"[504] until they made their way, during the eight-hundred- year interim, into some hypothetical early version of the grail story now lost. As we have seen, such hypotheses

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[502]Robert de Clari, *Chronicle*, in Edward Noble Stone, *Three Old French Chronicles of the Crusades*, p. 227.

[503]Ibid., p. 227.

[504]Jessie Weston, *From Ritual to Romance*, p. 164.

are totally useless, since any elements of the Pagan rites which may have entered, in an altered form, into the romance were already assimilated into Eastern Christianity. Other remnants would have been altered beyond recognition; Rosemarie Jones notes for example that "the funeral lament was an extremely popular genre in the twelfth century."[505] Although there is some similarity between this and practices for example of the Adonis cult, the trail connecting the two has clearly vanished. Bruce notes: "If our knowledge of the ancient mysteries and their ritual is meagre, our knowledge of any Celtic agrarian cult is simply nil."[506] In this vein, he adds that Nitze's theory, which is similar to, though not as fantastic as, Weston's, fails for the same reason: Nitze sees in the Grail the "kisti" of the Elefsinian mysteries, but he cannot make the connection between that cult and the Celtic world or the Middle Ages.

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It may seem anachronistic to devote such disproportionate space to a theory rejected years ago by most medievalists, but it is important, because of the mystery cult element in our interpretation, to make these distinctions between our position and the old, discredited theory. For the sake of completeness, Waite's book makes a rather elaborate attempt at interpreting the Grail Legend, but focuses on too many late texts to be considered here. U.T. Holmes' book on Chrétien summarizes several of the other recent

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[505]Rosemarie Jones, *Love in the Romans d'Antiquité*, p. 25.

[506]J.D. Bruce, *The Evolution of the Arthurian Romance*, p. 281.

theories on the Grail; we might consider them here. Holmes first dismisses Weston especially for abandonment of *sens* to *matière*: "The age in which Chrétien lived was profoundly Christian in ideal and practice even when an occasional individual was not sure of his personal theology".[507] Thus the ritualist theory, with its emphasis on fertility symbolism (lance male, graal female)[508] is out of context. Afterwards, he mentions the Celtic theories, particularly of Loomis;[509] he concurs that they must piece together diverse, unharmonized details in a medley of themes: Bron from Bran who is also wounded; the platter of Rhydderch which made food appear; a "perilous mound" in Southwest Wales, Lug's wife with a cup, his bleeding spear, etc. Again, such details are not only disparate, they also cannot account for the meaning of Chrétien's romance. Olschki's theory,[510] that the naive Perceval's confounding of the knights with devils and then angels smacks of gnosticism is easily refuted by his recital of prayers.[511] We have already made our argument against heresy. Finally, the Kahanes' thesis that Hermetic doctrines entered Chrétien's work through Apuleius' *Golden Ass*, which also describes a

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[507]U.T. Holmes and Sister M. Amelia Klenke, *Chrétien, Troyes, and the Grail*, (Chapel Hill, 1959), pp. iii, vi.

[508]U.T. Holmes, *Chrétien de Troyes*, pp. 141-3.

[509]Ibid., pp. 144-6.

[510]Ibid., p. 147.

[511]Olchski seems to think that the fact that the grail is bright has great significance, corresponding to Gnostic interpretations of John the Evangelist's "God is light", and that Chrétien's work, reflecting the "religious fervour", sectarian violence, mystical excesses, and bizarre symbolism" of heretical sects, had to be cleaned up by his continuators in their segments of the romance. (Leonardo Olchski, *The Grail and its Mysteries*, pp. 23-45.)

procession as well as a resurrection motif -- Osiris revived by a cup while his mouth is held open by a spear --[512] leaves us again to conclude that it was not necessary for Chrétien to reach so far back into obscure, defunct religious practices for symbolism that was available to him through religion as it had evolved to his day.

Finally, Holmes' own Judeo-Christian theory, taking into account the preponderance of Jews around Troyes in the twelfth century and the illuminations as well as carvings of Strasbourg, Chalons, St. Denis cathedrals and in the Holy Land of Synagoga and Ecclesia, the first blindfolded holding a broken lance, the latter as a radiant maiden holding a chalice, and suggesting that the meaning of the Grail Legend is charity towards Jews and the conversion from Old Testament to New,[513] does not hold water. First of all, in Holmes' scheme Perceval would have to effectuate some sort of change in the Sacrament to transform it, whereas we learn that Chrétien's ascetic old king had been nourished by the "oiste" for a number of years. Moreover, a large minority in a town with different customs and perceived wealth is not likely to inspire charitable sentiment, and the history of Western Europe is saturated with cases of Anti-Semitism from the Diaspora to the present. As for Chrétien, he clearly expresses his hate for Jews in two separate passages of the Perceval romance, and certainly not, as Holmes would suggest, only against the specific individuals who actually participated in the crucifixion

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[512]U.T. Holmes, *Chrétien de Troyes,* pp. 148-9.

[513]Ibid., p. 163.

of Christ.[514]

4. The Roman d'Helcanus

So, to sum up once again, from our perspective, the model of the Fisher King who must be made whole, whether from a wound, illness, old age, or death, and the act of redemption performed by the hero, clearly represent first of all Christ's sacrifice and resurrection, then the symbolic imitations of the saints, and in a more remote sense those of mystery cult gods. All of these elements were clearly transmissible through Byzantium: the ritual celebration of Christ's death and resurrection in Eastern Orthodox liturgy, the Saints' Lives whether original or in Latin translation, and the Ancient romances, possibly in their twelfth-century successors.

And, although, as we can see, Byzantium figures prominently in Old French romances, the West rarely appears in Byzantine works, and Westerners are rarely described except when passing through the Empire. In fact, the only Arthurian tale to be translated into Greek is the beginning of Rusticiano da Pisa's late text, *Girone il Cortese*,

[514]U.T. Holmes, *Chrétien de Troyes*, p. 167. In any case, those would technically have to be Roman soldiers, since the conquered Jews did not have the authority to crucify. Bible scholars, in fact, generally concur that the Romans were treated with extreme delicacy by the authors of the Gospels, -- in preserving Jesus' "render unto Caesar" speech, and shifting all the blame from Pilate to the Jewish priests -- in order to improve the chances of Christianity's survival in the Roman world. The twelfth-century *Synopsis Chroniki* of Manasses is under no such constraints, and there Romans and Jews are blamed equally. Chrétien, of course, also unconstrained by any political reasons, clearly chooses to condemn the Jews instead of the Romans, and that with quite bellicose rhetoric.

the beginning of his Arthurian compilation, where a 120 year old giant comes to challenge and defeat King Arthur's knights.[515] According to Bruce, "By a singular fortune, this extravagant episode is the only specimen of Arthurian romance, as far as we know, that penetrated into Byzantine literature. There, in a version of about the year 1300, we find it presented in Greek verses (306 lines), which are so strongly colored with Homeric phrasing and imagery that the lines produce the impression of a bombastic travesty of the style of the *Iliad*."[516]

As we have seen from the *Romans d'Aventure*, *Cligès*, and *Manuel and Amande*, the transmission of motifs to the West is another story. One thirteenth-century French romance, although not strictly a part of the Arthurian cycle, curiously incorporates mystery cult, Byzantine, grail and chevaleresque motifs, making it less likely that their association is the result of chance: from the Adonis legend, it borrows the wounding from a wild boar and need for restitution; from Byzantium, a Byzantine Emperor and a golden cup paraded with other vessels; and from the Chrétien romances, chivalric deeds and a Byzantine prince -- like Cligès -- traveling to the Arthurian court.

The romance, entitled in its modern publication *Le Roman d'Helcanus,* forms a transition in the cycle of *Les Sept Sages de Rome* between the romance of *Cassidorus, Emperor of Byzantium*, and that of his son, *Peliarmenus*, who plots the murder of his half-brothers in order to attain the Byzantine throne. In the transition romance,

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[515]Edmund G. Gardner, *The Arthurian Legend in Italian Literature*, (London, 1930), pp. 49-50.

[516]J.D. Bruce, *The Evolution of the Arthurian Romance*, vol. 2, p. 28.

Cassidorus and his son Helcanus set off on a series of adventures which include imprisonment, rescue, and reunion, to some extent on the Hellenistic model. In the central episode, however, the Emperor experiences an adventure reminiscent of Perceval's Grail Castle. He encounters a boar which he slays, cutting off the head and genitals according to ancient custom. Afterwards, Cassidorus "...est venuz a .i. trop riche chastel petit. Bien vit li empereres a la clarté de la lune, qui grant estoit que moult avoit on grant estude mise au deviser le; quar il ne cuidoit mie que nuls homs eust sons en lui ne retenance tant que tele oeuvre eust esté parfaite."[517] When he enters, he encounters the bed-ridden mistress of the castle, Celydoine, ill since her father was slain by the boar and sad from the threat of a forced marriage to Cassius, a suitor claiming to have avenged him by slaying the boar.

The parallel to the illness of the fisher king is obvious, with the need for the hero to make things right in a manner not necessarily logical. In the next scene, Cassidorus is shown to a bed chamber -- actually Celydoine's, although a number of identical ones exist in the castle -- and beautiful young women bring him a golden cup, candles, and silver pots, reminiscent of the Grail Castle procession. If any deliberate allusion is made, however, either the original significance of the Grail is forgotten by this author, or his golden cup is satirical by comparison, as it contains a magical philter which is to keep the Emperor awake so he and Celydoine might indulge in an uninterrupted night of love-making. The couple make use of the potion on at least three occasions.

Needless to say, the Emperor defeats his rival and restores Celydoine to her honor

[517]Henri Niedzielski, ed., *Le Roman de Helcanus,* (Geneva, 1973), p. 59.

as well as to the property of the vanquished knight. After a series of vaguely related conflicts, the narrative breaks off at the point where Peliarmenus, six years after the Emperor's departure, looking after his father while seeking to harm his brother, decides to set off for King Arthur's court in Britain.

Once again, in spite of the confused symbolism, the mystery cult roots and Byzantine inspiration for an Old French romance seem obvious, confirming the most likely route for Chrétien's inspiration. So, in one point of contact with the Byzantine East, regardless of whether the actual romances were read by Chrétien de Troyes, we have, in a nutshell, the symbols of the Nature Cults, the belief in personal salvation through a savior of the Mystery Cults and the Ancient romances, the Christianized form of these beliefs, as well as the concrete form of the Byzantine ceremonial procession, all present consciously or subconsciously in the work of Chrétien de Troyes. It would be too far-fetched to suggest that Chrétien imagined or invented a scene with so much parallel symbolism without actually having traveled to Byzantium, or having at his disposal very detailed first-hand accounts. As has been attested in the case of Jean de Meung and Gottfried von Strassburg, Chrétien obviously read widely, and could have assimilated various other elements, from Latin versions of Saints' Lives to Welsh legends. Moreover, to search for all of the elements of Chrétien's story in one source would prove fruitless, as some allocation must be made for the creativity of the greatest author of his age. From all indications, however, the importance of Byzantium as a source of inspiration and symbolism for the Grail Legend cannot be neglected.

In this manner, Chrétien's Grail romance inadvertently follows Mircea Eliade's

archetypal model in *The Myth of the Eternal Return* of "ceaseless repetition of gestures initiated by others."[518] Through its hagiographic and Byzantine ceremonial sources, Chrétien's romance echoes the myths of pre-modern, traditional societies where "nostalgia for a periodical return to the mythical time of the beginning of things... and rejection of profane, continuous time" lead to "a certain metaphysical valorization of human existence."[519] In this context, the Grail becomes the archetypal object of the human quest for salvation, whether in the form of the Orthodox communion chalice, which in the later romances becomes the vessel in which Joseph of Arimathea kept the blood of the crucified Christ, or, in a more primitive sense, as the "horn of plenty" that, in a primitive agricultural society, can symbolically assure the survival of a people.

Thus, whereas there is no direct model for Chrétien's work in the Byzantine literature of the time, it is safe to say, as with much of the Old French literature of the period, that Byzantium at large was a rich source of inspiration. As Erich Kohler concludes, rather than "exakt nachgewiesene Einwirkung byzantinischer Literarur im engeren Sinne", Byzantium's influence on Western literature should be understood as consisting in

> "Byzanz als unmittelbare Quelle durch seine eigene Literatur, Byzanz als mehr oder weniger originelle Bearbeiterin und Vermittlerin orientalischen Bildungsguts, Bysanz als historische Wirklichkeit, die Stoffe und Anlaβ zur politischen, religiösen und ideologischen Auseinandersetzung bietet, und Byzanz als Verwalterin des Erbes der klassichen griechichen Dichtung und Philosophie."[520]

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[518]Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, (Princeton, 1965), pp. 4-5.

[519]Ibid., p. ix.

[520]Erich Köhler, "Byzanz und die Literatur der Romania", in *Grundriss des Romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters*, vol. 1, p. 407.

5. Wolfram and Robert

One objection to the explanation here offered might be the divergence of Wolfram of Eschenbach in his German adaptation of the Perceval romance. Although the French continuator of the romance, Pseudo-Wauchier, adds a few motifs -- the Wasteland, the dead knight on a bier, and the mysterious hand at the chapel, -- the other continuators, Wauchier de Denain, Manesier and Gerbert add very little to the Chrétien prototype, they barely diverge from his plot, and they grow progressively more boring. Moreover, the later English Perceval of Galles does not mention the Grail adventure at all. In Wolfram, however, we have "In respect to originality of style, of moral conceptions and of ideal, in general,... [a poet] superior to all his predecessors in medieval poetry and unequalled among romance writers even to the end of the period."[521] In Wolfram's version of the romance, the Grail is described as a flat stone with the magical power to produce food. Although Bruce suggests that some critics interpret Wolfram's "stein" as a container for liquids, it is more likely that Wolfram, through his citation of a fictional source named Kyot and the blatantly satirical additions to his composition, is attempting to distance himself from the prototype of Chrétien. Bruce points out the parody inherent in Wolfram's work, particularly in the story of Perceval's father where the Caliph of Baghdad is the equivalent of King Arthur.[522]

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[521]J.D. Bruce, *The Evolution of the Arthurian Romance*, pp. 324-5.

[522]Ibid., p. 312. Henry Kratz as professor at the University of Tennessee, has expressed an equal skepticism about this definition.

In his work, therefore, the original meaning of the Grail -- which, incidently, Chrétien may even have employed without knowing it himself -- would have been of no particular interest.[523] Kratz concurs, in evaluating the tone of the romance, that Wolfram is "pulling our leg" with much of his description, not taking "daz... dinc, daz hiez der Grâl" very seriously.[524] Most importantly, Kratz notes the important linkage between this romance and the Crusades, particularly in the inspiration for the first two books which have no source in Chrétien, as remarkable similarities exist between Gahmuret, Perceval's father, and Richard the Lionhearted. Following Panzer and Snelleman, Kratz cites 1. that both were lords of Anjou, including Wales, 2. Gahmuret's black panther coat of arms resembles Richard's in 1189, which changed to three lions in 1191; 3. both become king after the sudden death of a relative; 4. both are close to their mothers; Alienor went to prison for Richard, supporting him against her husband Henry, and went to ransom him in Germany although in her seventies; 5. both are betrothed to French princesses, Gahmuret to Amphlise, Richard to Adelaide, daughter of

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[523]Bruce also notes a possible source of the "stone" in the *Alexanderroman* or even in Jewish or Arabic tales, (J.D. Bruce, *The Evolution of the Arthurian Romance*, p. 358), which may not be totally unrealistic in light of Wolfram's introduction to the romance, with its apparent allusions to the Crusades and possibly the *Digenis* tradition. We have also already noted Kahane's theory of a Hermetic "loadstone" as the source. (Kahane, "The Krater and the Grail", in *Graeca et Romanica Scripta Selecta*, vol. 2, p. 170.)

[524]According to Kratz, "Wolfram... distanc[es] himself from his material. We have the feeling that [he] is a little imbarrassed at the narrative... when he is called upon to describe the miraculous workings of the Grail,... [an] object... [which] he could not take seriously... the extreme prolixity of the description of the food that was dished out by the Grail... must have been meant humorously. I also suspect a note of irony in other expressions relating to the Grail where the banality of the language makes it suspect."(Henry Kratz, *Wolfram von Eschenbach's Parzival*, p. 429.)

Louis VII; 6. both have brave exploits in the East, and are blown off-course and shipwrecked, thereby gaining a crown and a queen; Richard was shipwrecked on Cyprus andmarried to Berengaria. 7. both fought Saracens and 8. both died of battle wounds.[525]

Waite also sees a later Crusader connection, in Wolfram's description of the Grail Knights. We have already noted that in Byzantine and Crusader literature miraculous events took place in battle or to military men; Waite sees a more precise similarity between the clothing of the Grail Knights and that of the Templars, an order which subsequently settled on the Greek island of Rhodes. According to Waite, the Patriarch of Jerusalem and the Templars sent in 1247 a "sangreal" containing blood of Christ, which had once belonged to Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea, to Henry III. It should be noted of course, that there were at least two such alleged vessels; one the "Sacro Catino" of Genoa, and the other, a "sacred vessel" in Constantinople.[526] Such duplication of precious relics between East and West was quite frequent in the Middle Ages.

Kratz concludes that "Wolfram must have had access to all sorts of material pertaining to the East and the Crusades--from oral reports and tall tales of crusaders returned from the Holy Land to learned or semi-learned accounts of pagan astrology and astrologers."[527] He also points out the existence of other romances inspired by the East: *Ipomedon, Joufrois, Kai, Kaiserchronik* and *Eneide.* Indeed, Hellenic themes abounded

[525]Henry Kratz, *Wolfram von Eschenbach's Parzival*, (Bern, 1973), pp. 464-7.

[526]Arthur Waite, *The Holy Grail,* (New York, 1961), pp. 479, 333.

[527]Kratz, p. 470.

in German literature of the time, whether in adaptations of the French *Romans d'Antiquité* or romances inspired by the Crusades. The *Alexander* romance, in fact, is the first of the German romances in 1150; also pre-dating Wolfram and a potential source is the *Graf Rudolf* fragment (1170), in which a Crusader marries a Saracen princess and defends a caravan carrying back gold and jewels to the West.[528]

We might also point out a significant similarity between Wolfram's work and the *Digenis*: the two-part structure of the story and the two-blooded son, part Christian part Saracen. In any case, although Wolfram does not take much interest in the Christian symbolism of the Grail, he does offer tangible proof of a direct link with Byzantium and the Crusades which will presently make the Crusader thesis of the Grail legend more credible. As to the Christian interpretation of the Grail proper, we must look to Chrétien's younger contemporary, Robert de Boron.

Robert de Boron, beginning with his *Joseph of Arimathea* romance, easily identifies the Grail as the cup of the Last Supper, containing Christ's blood.[529] Robert wrote at the end of the 12th century,[530] and was a younger contemporary of Chrétien's who wrote the Perceval romance at the court of Philip of Alsace. Since, according to

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[528]Henning Krauss, ed., *Europäisches Hochmittelalter*, p. 329.

[529]As such it could easily be associated with a food-producing vessel, since Christ promised to symbolically provide life-giving water through which the believer will not thirst for eternity.

[530]Bruce suggests the limits of 1180-1199. (J.D. Bruce, *The Evolution of the Arthurian Romance*, vol. 1, p. 223.) More recently, a date of circa 1190 has been proposed. (In David staines, *The Complete Romances of Chrétien de Troyes*; see following pages. As we have already noted, Kibler's new edition is more conservative about proposing a specific date for the romance.)

Staines, the best arguments for the dating of the Perceval place it at the later extreme of Chrétien's residence at the court, around 1190, thus between 1168 and 1190, Robert began to write simultaneously, or just after, this last work of Chrétien.[531] Therefore, hisinterpretation cannot be the imposition of some religious fervour of the following century, but the interpretation current at Chrétien's time, and within the Christian context of the Arthurian corpus as a whole, and particularly of the Crusading period. According to Holmes, "Suffice it to say that Robert de Boron, and others, almost immediately after Chrétien, interpreted his meaning in terms of Christian mysticism."[532]

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[531]As we note later, the argument has been made that the two works were at least contemporary, since Robert seems to think that he is the first to ever treat this matter in a romance.

[532]U.T. Holmes, *Chrétien de Troyes*, p. 136. An interesting point about Robert's Christianity is the amount of speculation on his description of man's salvation according to Joseph of Arimathea:

"est de mort resuscitez,
A son pere s'en est alez;
O soi ha nostre char portee,
En paradis glorifiee."(2231-4)

The mention of "nostre char" is the subject of some inflation in the prose version, "en cele char meïsmes en qoi il fu an terre".(1107) This has led to some speculation that Robert's Christianity may have been colored by Bogomil/Cathar beliefs, hermetism, etc. According to O'Gorman, "It would take volumes to review the subtle and mysterious speculations of some writers, past and present, who laboriously seek out hermetic influence, theosophic overtones, secret and hidden esoterica of all sorts where the Grail romances are concerned." He concludes that, in Robert's works, "the underlying currents of thought are rigorously and exclusively orthodox: influences from Christian dogma, canon law, religious symbolism, partristic teaching, Biblical exegesis.... The passage under consideration is immediately intelligible in terms of attested Old French grammatical usage and common orthodox Christian doctrine: in the verse version that Christ, through His suffering and death on the cross, redeemed man and restored his heavenly reward, while in the prose version that Christ ascended to heaven in body as well as in spirit."(Richard O'Gorman, "A Note on the Orthodoxy of Robert de Boron," in *Neophilologische Mitteilungen*, VXXX, 1979, pp. 387-389.

Robert's romance is like an "enfance" to Chrétien's, in that it traces the early history of the Grail, through Christ's passion to an apparition to Joseph of Arimathea, and finally to the "Fisher King", keeper of the Grail in Britain. This early history sets up the medieval adventures, the Table of the Last Supper reflected in the Grail Table and Round Table at the court of King Arthur where the Siege Perillous is to be filled only by the knight who is to achieve the adventure of the Grail. Interestingly, however, the sources of the basic story, Joseph of Arimathea's connection to the Grail, appears to be borrowed from the *Apocrypha*: the "Gesta Pilati" of the *Evangelium Nicodemi,* the *Vindicta Salvatoris,* and the *Narratio Josephi.*[533] In this connection, Bruce throws in a tantalizing detail: the 8th-century *Historia Ecclesiastica et Mysterica Contemplatia* of Germanos, Archbishop of Constantinople, mentions the objects of the liturgy in connection with Joseph of Arimathea:

> "the Greek treatise of doubtful authorship, printed by Migne in vol. 98 of his *Patrologia Graeca*, cols. 383ff., among the writings of Germanos, Archbishop of Constantinople (who died in 733), as the earliest allusion to a vessel in which the blood that flowed from Christ's side was received. The work... is certainly no later than the tenth century. The allusion occurs cols. 400B and 421D, and the vessel is identified with the cup of the Eucharist... In 397B the author of this treatise interprets the paten (Greek discos) which bore the holy bread in the mass as 'the bed (kline) in which the body of the Lord is prepared by the priest and deacon, who...[represent] Joseph and Nicodemus.' These... names are again connected with the allegorical interpretation of the diskos at 421D, as, indeed, they occur in the Eucharistic liturgy of the Eastern Church."[534]

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[533]J.D. Bruce, *The Evolution of the Arthurian Romance*, vol. 1, p. 238.

[534]Ibid., p. 240n.

Since Robert obviously is drawing from apocryphal and possibly Byzantine sources, it would not be too fantastic to suggest that he was aware of such texts and used them in his composition of Joseph. Whether Chrétien had such sources -- and intentions -- is open to question, but clearly, as we have shown, his sources were Christian and Byzantine, although he may have adopted his symbolism more blindly, not quite knowing its full extent. We must emphasize again, however, that the implication of these sources, -- spiritual salvation --, is at the center of Chrétien's allegory.

It will be recalled that Jean Frappier would have us believe that, since two of Chrétien's followers -- Pseudo-Wauchier and Wolfram, seem to misinterpret the grail as a food-producing vessel, we should follow their insight without any indications in Chrétien's text that this is so. This is quite surprising, since Loomis rejects the Christian significance of Chrétien's grail, even though Robert and most subsequent authors clearly recognize it, and, most importantly, Chrétien points it out himself. According to Loomis, "Nor can I believe... that because Chrétien's last poem contains a short passage (of some 300 out of 9200 lines)... describing the *graal* as a receptacle for a magical mass wafer, and setting forth some rudimentary lessons in Christian faith, the poet turned over a new leaf in his old age and consecrated his declining years to a work of piety."[535] We are puzzled -- though in light of other statements not surprised -- that such a reputable critic should stick to his dogmatic interpretation despite clear evidence to the contrary: there is not a single 300-line Christian insert in Chrétien's romance; the romance is permeated by Christianity throughout. We have already noted that, from the sermonizing over

[535]Quoted in Amelia Klenke, *Chrétien de Troyes and the Conte del Graal,* p. 33.

charity in the prologue, to the mother's teachings, Perceval's perception of the knights, his quest for moral and spiritual purification, the symbolism of the grail containing the host, the hermit's lessons, Perceval's conversion on Easter Sunday and the underlying death and resurrection plot, this is a work which, beyond any reasonable doubt, was intended from the start as a Christian allegory.

Moreover, recent research has yielded some interesting hypotheses concerning the relationship between Chrétien and Robert de Boron. According to Linda Gowans, a textual comparison of the Didot *Perceval* and the Wauchier (second continuation) of Chrétien seems to contradict the usual speculation, making the Didot the earlier work. This, along with her analysis of the "mindset" of the author, seems to suggest that the Didot, or perhaps an earlier version of it, was actually written by Robert de Boron as a continuation to his *Joseph* and *Merlin.* In *Joseph*, Robert notes that the material he will relate has not been touched upon before. This suggests to Gowans that the beginning of Robert's cycle could have been undertaken independently of Chrétien, and that, once exposed to *le Conte del Graal*, he proceeded in a manner perhaps unanticipated, to conform his tale to the more popular grail romance. Gowans also points to a detail in this romance where Arthur contemplates battle with Rome in a room decorated with scenes from the love story of Helen and Paris;[536] description of painted scenes was, of course, a commonplace of the Byzantine romance.

[536]Linda M. Gowans, "New Perspectives on the Didot Perceval, *Arthurian Literature* 7(1987), 18.

6. The Crusader theory

Corroborating this interconnection and the argument for a Christian explanation of the Grail is another recent work by Armel Diverres, which convincingly suggests that Chrétien's work is actually a *roman à clé* based on the life of his patron, Philip of Flanders. Diverres offers a detailed account of the recent history of the House of Flanders, of Robert I (1087-1090) who made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and was in the service of Alexius Comnenus; of his son, Robert II, who played a prominent part in the First Crusade, returning home to retire in glory; his cousin, Advocate of the Holy Sepulchre, and his nephew, Thierry, who in 1134 was married to Sibylla, the daughter of Fulk of Anjou, initiating a dynasty on the throne of Jerusalem which lasted for fifty years. Thierry of Alsace, who ruled until 1168, made four trips to the Holy Land. In 1147-9 he participated in the Second Crusade, and his countess, in 1159, remained permanently in the Holy Land as Abbess. His last trip was in 1168.[537]

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[537]One interesting corroboration of a Crusader connection to the Grail romance is suggested by Edmund Gardner's study of Arthurian romance in Italy, where the characters of Arthurian legend are apparently borrowed from France, but artifacts figuring in the romances seem to come from the East. According to Gardner, in the eleventh century, names like "Arturius", "Galvanus", "Merlinus" and "Gradalis" appear near Pavia, suggesting that French minstrels brought with them stories of Arthur even before the definitive Geoffrey of Monmouth pseudo-history. Moreover, the Modena cathedral sculpture suggests knowledge of Arthur at the beginning of the twelfth century, immediately after the passing of the First Crusaders through Italy.

As far as grail legend material, however, the reverse seems to be the case. We have already mentioned the "sacro cattino" of Genoa; it is mentioned by William of Tyre, in the late twelfth century, as "a vessel of the greenest colour, formed in the shape of a dish, deeming it to be of emerald." The object was part of the Genoese spoils from Tyre, captured by Crusaders in 1101. As time went by, the vessel obtained the association with the Grail; according to the Archbishop Jacobus de Voragine, " The

Philip was born around 1142 and ruled independently at 23. He was considered one of the finest knights, an equal of William the Marshall. His first trip to the Holy Land was a pilgrimage in 1177; here, he refused to head a latino-byzantine expedition against Egypt, and returned through Constantinople in 1178. For the next two years he was regent to Philip Augustus, before a five-year feud (1181-86). After the reconciliation, Guy of Lusignan, ruler of Jerusalem, was taken prisoner as Saladin took the Holy Sepulchre; with Tyre the only city remaining in Latin hands, Philip departed on the Third Crusade with Richard the Lionhearted, never to return: he died of endemic fever in 1191 at the siege of Acre. By the end of the crusade in 1192, all that was left of the Latin kingdoms was Acre and a coastal strip; the endeavor was a failure.[538]

But, as we have seen, some would argue that defeat and chaos engender literary creativity. Following Helen Adolf's interpretation, Diverres argues, generally convincingly except for a few details which we shall discuss, that the history of Philip and the Royal House of Jerusalem in this time of crisis is behind the Grail mystery: since

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vessel is made in the likeless of a dish, whence it is commonly said that it was that dish out of which Christ with his disciples ate the Last Supper... Now whether this be true, we know not; but, since with God nothing is impossible, therefore we neither firmly assert nor obstinately deny it... however... in certain books of the English it is found that, when Nicodemus took down the Body of Chirst from the Cross, he collected His blood, which was still fresh and had been shamefully scattered, in a certain vessel of emerald miraculously presented to him by God, and that vessel the said English in their books call Sanguinalia.... Now in course of time it was translated to Caesaria, and at last brought of Genoa."(Edmund G. Gardner, *The Arthurian Legend in Italian Literature*, pp. 1-20.)

Thus, there is a clear Crusader connection to the Holy Grail; the question to answer will be whether the connection was made before or after the writing of the first romances.

[538]Armel Diverres, *The Grail and the Third Crusade,* in *Arthurian Literature*, 10(1990), 24-30.

the romance was commissioned by the Count of Flanders, it was written for a court that had been fascinated by the crusade ideal for virtually a century and whose lord's lineage was intertwined with that of the royal house of Jerusalem."[539] According to their scheme, the Fisher King, Perceval's cousin, is actually Baldwin IV, Philip's cousin, who is also impotent but through leprosy, a disease unseemly for the elevated *matière* of courtly romance. According to this scheme, the visit to the grail castle represents Philip's 1177 trip to the Holy Land, during which he showed Perceval's lack of consideration by refusing the regency of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. The argument is supported by allusions which, according to Diverres, an audience of the time would readily recognize as related to the Holy Land. Enough evidence is given to make this thesis a serious possibility: the description of the Grail Castle -- a tower with two turrets and square hall -- resembling the representation of Jerusalem on period coins, the girl with the dead knight as Philip's cousin Sibylla, who had lost her husband in the Holy Land, Perceval's search for his mother as that of Philip for his own, shut up in a Jerusalem convent, the parallel between Perceval's five godless years and Philip's five years of strife with the King, both followed by penance, the disaster of 1187 as prophecy of the destruction of the Kingdom of Logres, "Fisher King" as a natural appelation for the ruler of the Holy Land, even names of villains or coastal towns reminiscent of Saracen-held territories. However, the interpretation becomes strained when Diverres must explain the procession in the Grail Castle, and account for all of Gawain's adventures as allegories of Crusader action: Gawain's "choice... to go to the aid of the damsel besieged near Montesclaire and

[539]Armel Diverres, *The Grail and the Third Crusade*, p. 32.

to win the Espee as Estranges Renges could be interpreted as a decision on his part to lead an expedition against the Saracens, possibly to take over a principality in the Levant, the early adventures... as diversionary actions."[540]

As to the Grail Castle interpretation, it is based strictly on history:

> "Philip of Flanders was related to the House of Jerusalem through his maternal grandfather Fulk of Anjou, who by his second marriage to Melisende, daughter and heiress of Baldwin II, became king of Jerusalem in 1131, ruling until his death in 1143 and being succeeded by his two sons by Melisende, Baldwin III (1143-63), who died without issue, and Amaury I (1163-1174), the count's uncles, being his mother's half-brothers. At the time of Philip's first visit to the Holy Land in 1177-78, the ruler was his cousin, Amaury's son Baldwin IV, an impotent leper transformed for poetic and courtly reasons into the maimed Fisher King. Perceval's inability to ask the relevant questions about the significance of the bleeding lance and the grail is a poetic transposition of Philip's first visit to Jerusalem, from which came no benefit to the kingdom. Problems ensued; the taking of the cross at Gisors was in effect an act of repentance on Philip's part for the years of material activity directed towards his own interests, and not towards those of the suzerain or of Christ. This is the significance... of Perceval's conversion on Good Friday."[541]

Now to make of the Grail Procession a precise allegorical parallel to the events of Philip's visit, Diverres must dismiss the candles, placed there only to show the superior brilliance of the host in the Grail, and must make of the tailleor a dish for serving meat, thus to suggest the choice of heavenly or earthly nourishment.[542] Here, he must suggest that the spiritual nourishment is offered because the old Grail King is actually dead, the years of his taking communion corresponding to the years Baldwin's father has been

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[540]Armel Diverres, *The Grail and the Third Crusade*, p. 78.

[541]Ibid., p. 62.

[542]When Fisher King eats from a tailleor, Diverres mistakenly argues it is the very same one which appears in the procession; by contrast, the secluded Grail King eats spiritual nourishment.

dead.[543] Still, in light of all of the parallels offered, Diverres offers a constructive alternative view of the Grail Procession, which only requires alteration in its most controversial parts -- after all, Chrétien is writing fiction, so he does not need to lift every historical detail with such precision -- to fit into the Byzantine-Christian theory.

The most intriguing part of this explanation refers to the lance, which, it will be recalled, was allegedly discovered by the First Crusaders but dismissed as a hoax, being an old Arab spear. According to Diverres, that lance was offered to Alexius Comnenus by the Crusaders; in the romance, it represents a prophecy that the land is to suffer; this is taken to be a reference to an event which must have been accomplished at the time of writing: the destruction of the Kingdom of Jerusalem by Saladin in 1187. If this were the case, composition of the romance would have to be dated at the latest extreme of Philip's lifetime, between 1188 and 1192.[544] Thus, Chrétien and Robert are roughly contemporary, and both are using Christian (Byzantine) symbolism in their works. Staines' preface to his recent translation of Chrétien's work confirms this dating, and even suggests that the work may have been abandoned in 1191 not necessarily due to Chrétien's death, but rather to that of his patron.[545] In support of this unproven thesis we might note that there is no indication of a weakening of Chrétien's faculties in this work; if anything, it is the most substantial in its theme and the most intricate in its pattern, its projected length clearly surpassing any of his earlier works. Thus, only some

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[543]Armel Diverres, *The Grail and the Third Crusade*, pp. 33-57.

[544]Ibid., p. 32.

[545]David Staines, "Introduction", in Chrétien de Troyes, *The Complete Romances*, (Bloomington, 1990), p. xi.

kind of unexpected sudden death could explain its abandonment, and we know for sure of Philip's death but have no information on Chrétien's except for the attestation of one of his continuators.

The Adolf/Diverres thesis, which would support the Byzantine provenance of the ceremonial motif through the contacts of Crusaders, also confirms the thesis earlier expressed by Hägg and Beaton that romances tend to be written in troubled times when people are searching for comfort through the metaphorical salvation that fiction provides.[546] Such a time, clearly, is the loss of the reconquered Jerusalem by the Crusaders, and obviously comfort in the Christianized theme of personal salvation would be the logical theme of a romance written under the circumstances. Thus, if we accept even in part this explanation of the origin of the Grail romance as a retreat into the comfort of literature and away from the humiliating reality of military defeat and metaphysical uncertainty, then indeed we are not very far from our the Christian/Byzantine interpretation. In fact, the Grail story, as connected with the Crusades, reinforces this interpretation: if the story of the Grail represents an actual adventure in the East -- and it will be remembered that the Crusaders had sworn allegiance to the Emperor of Byzantium --, then to lend authenticity to the story the author would have to use Byzantine-inspired imagery.[547] One way to synthesize the

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[546]Helen Adolf cites the need for a 'new medium' after the defeat. (Helen Adolf, *Visio Pacis,* (Penn State, 1960), p. 18.

[547]One critic disagrees; in a recent article, Antonio Furtado accepts the Crusader connection of the Grail Romance, but suggests that Chrétien wove his allegory of the experiences of Philip in the Holy Land not out of Byzantine symbolism and imagery, but out of incidents in the *Arabian Nights,* this being, he suggests, the book which Philip

brought back to Chrétien.

According to Furtado, *Perceval* and the tale of "The Fisherman and the Jinni" (10th century) present striking similarities. In both, a voyager arrives in a mountainous region with a stream and a fisherman/guide, then goes to a castle of dark stone, where he enters the vestibule, and then a room where the host is seated on a couch, his head covered and wearing rich clothes. The host apologizes for not being able to get up and greet the traveler. The distance to the castle is uncertain; the traveler draws a sword; a princess passes with a cup followed by another object; she goes into another room. The fisherman is called rich; the secluded room contains a man who, nearly dead, is nourished by the contents of the cup.

If the characters of the fisherman who becomes wealthy and the maimed prince are combined to form Chrétien's Fisher King, this may explain why the fisherman strangely points the way to the castle, but is already there when Perceval arrives. Also, in "The Fisherman and the Jinni", the question about the prince's infirmity is asked immediately, and he responds: he had once maimed his wife's lover and she, a witch, turned him to stone from the waist down, and nourished the lover from a goblet of wine. Moreover, she transformed his subjects into fish. The sword is used to resolve the situation: to force the princess to restore the king and his subjects, and then to slay her and her lover. Perceval, by contrast, fails to ask the all-important quettion, and thus does not restore the crippled king or his power to govern, as is pointed out by his "cousin". (Later versions will add the wasteland, equivalent to the land whose subjects have turned to fish.) The princess in "The Fisherman and the Jinni" expresses her desire to die with her lover in similar terms to Perceval's cousin, who's lover has been killed.

Other details of the *Perceval*, according to Furtado, are gleaned from various other stories in the *Arabian Nights*. A secluded boyhood, feigned mistake of lovers for angels, birds fighting inspiring thoughts of one's love, impolite messengers beaten, an ugly woman pointing the way to adventures, and characteristics of Gawain's arrogant damsel as well as many elements of his marvelous bed adventure can all be found in the *Arabian Nights*, as well as a wounding in the thigh by a javelin, a wounding to make riding impossible, fasting in a secluded room broken by drinking from a sealed cup, an evil witch, the use of a sword to kill her, magic swords, a staff breaking in a first encounter, a knife oozing blood to indicate the death of its owner, a failed treasure hunt after abandining a mother, and, in "Prince Diamond", a procession.

Finally, Furtado suggests that the Elidurus episode from Geoffrey of Monmouth, to which Chrétien's romance connects, may have also been inspired by the *Arabian Nights*. In any case, in the final composite version by Chrétien "the detailed plot was the result of a subtle composition technique recalling the making of stained glass, over a broad cartoon of Chrétiens design, fragments of scened from the *Arabian Nights* are laid upon, like pieces of glass of different colors." (Antonio Furtado, "The Arabian Nights: Yet Another Source of the Grail Stories?" in *Quondam et Futurus* 1(1991), pp. 25-40.)

Although probability and preponderance of references would suggest that the Byzantine explanation is more likely, -- Magdalino points out that a miracle at a banquet,

Crusade and Byzantine elements is through Stefan Hofer's theory. According to Holmes, this is "the highest point in the Christian explanation of the Grail theme... Count Philip showed to Chrétien... a book on the Passion Relics of Jerusalem, in which there were ceremonial descriptions according to the Byzantine Rite... Philip's mother was a daughter of Foulque, king of Jerusalem. Philip persuaded Chrétien to treat in romance form certain mystical reflections of the late twelfth century."[548]

But Diverres goes one step further in suggesting a last tantalizing connection with Byzantium: he unconvincingly suggests that the death of Philip could have occurred during the writing of the hermit episode, leaving Chrétien without motivation to continue with the grail story, and therefore composing the voluminous unrelated Gawain adventures, possibly for a different patron. In any case, the actual winning of the Grail adventure and the crowning of Perceval as Grail King does not occur until three continuations later, in the work of Manessier. Now Manessier's patron was the daughter of Baldwin of Flanders, Philip's nephew, who would be crowned king of Byzantium as

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which is the central episode of the Grail romance, also occurs in the Byzantine romance *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*, where the theme of symbolic death and resurrection is reproduced, the actual "miracle" being a magician's trick whereby a man kills himself and is brought back to life, (Paul Magdalino, *The Perception of the Past in Twelfth-century Europe*, p. 150) -- the *Arabian Nights* explanation, which is also quite credible through the similarity of incident, also fits into our basic model. Emile Dermenghem says of the *Arabian Nights*: "A l'origine, il est sans doute la littérarisation de liturgies initiatiques très anciennes, et il ne faut pas s'étonner de retrouver dans le folklore arabe comme dans les autres folklores des thèmes qui coïncident avec ceux des Mystères d'Isis ou d'Eleusis comme avec les cérémonies observées dans les cycles culturels étudiés par les ethnographes."(Emile Dermenghem, "Littérature Arabe", in Raymond Queneau, ed., *Histoire des Littératures*, (Paris, 1955), vol. 2, p. 837.)

[548]U.T. Holmes, *Chrétien de Troyes*, p. 139.

a result of the Fourth Crusade. If the parallel continues, then the Grail Kingdom represents not only the Latin Kingdoms established in the Holy Land contrary to the agreement with the Byzantines, but also the entity that they strived to replace: the Byzantine empire itself, first coveted and afterwards swallowed up by the West. Such a scheme seems to make all the pieces fit, the "Grail Kingdom" being the Eastern Empire envied by Westerners and not actually possessed in full until the conquest of Constantinople, the source for the mystical symbolism of the work.

In this connection we also find a little support in the Perceval continuations which, although not consistent in their symbolism, bathe the Grail mystery in a Byzantine aura: a Byzantine sword, a dead knight's bier covered by a "great cloth of red Grecian samite... with a cross of golden thread in the middle"[549] -- reminiscent of the Byzantine lion cloth used by the German bishops. Also described are costly censers, "a splendid tunic of sumptuous cloth from Constantinople,"[550] a procession of canons chanting, and even a false burial episode. Clearly the continuators were either aware of the Byzantine provenance of the grail motif, or they were at the very least influenced by the taste for Eastern luxuries reinforced by the Crusades, as might be suggested by the description of the host:

> "Un biau prodome auques chanu
> Trovent dedanz un lit seant,
> Qui pas ne sambloit penant,
> Pautonier, garçon ne ribaut;

[549]Chrétien de Troyes, *Perceval,* transl. Nigel Bryant, (Cambridge, 1982), p. 129.

[550]Ibid.

Que solemant sa robe vaut
Cent marz dom il estoit vestuz.
Ses chapiaux n'est pas de festuz,
Ains estoit d'un noir sebelin
Covers d'un porpre alixandrin.
Et par de desus som chapel
Avoit un cercle d'or molt bel,
Plain de jafes et de sadoines,
Plain de pierres bones et cointes,
Les meillors que l'am puet avoir."(3712-25)

7. The Grail in other romances

Furthermore, references to the grail as a sacramental vessel are clear in the other versions of the grail romance. Although these are generally dismissed as an attempt to Christianize the "Pagan" legend, they do provide some interesting details worth mentioning. In the *Diû Crône,* (German, c.1220), in which Gawain, instead of being the usual standard of comparison for the other knights entering King Arthur's court, actually wins the grail, the Grail King is nourished by blood,[551] a clear allusion to sacramental transubstantiation.[552]

One Perceval adaptation, through its strange topography, seems to support the Crusader hypothesis, borrowing its description from the Levant and Byzantium. In the *Sone de Nansay*, a strange non-Arthurian romance of the late 13th century, the hero, Sone,

[551]J.D. Bruce, *The Evolution of the Arthurian Romance,* vol. 1, p. 348.

[552]Some critics note that the transubstantiation controversy, with its distinction between *corpus verum* and *corpus mysticum*, was a current -- and unresolved -- topic in the twelfth century, until finally settled by the Lateran Council and the scholasticists in 1215, and that Chrétien himself might be making some symbolic commentary on the matter.(See Leonardo Olchski, *The Grail and its Mysteries,* p. 24.)

goes to Norway, where the Grail Castle is actually an island monastery with a castle within a wall with four square towers, like the previously mentioned depiction of Jerusalem. Interestingly, there are "almond, olive trees, camels, griffins," etc. in this environment.[553] Such a description could only refer to Byzantium and the Holy Land, but certainly not to the topography of Norway. Furthermore, as Bruce notes, "on the walk were images of leopards, which, when the wind struck their open mouths, emitted the loveliest music." As we have seen, such marvels were to be seen at the Byzantine court, in the palace and at the hippodrome. Perhaps the author wished to remove the story, however, to a more distant and mythical land, thus setting it in the extreme North. Again, the sacramental nature of the Grail is clear: "the grail service is conducted in the sight of the whole people and after the ceremony is over, the abbot puts the sacred vessel into an ivory box, exactly as a priest of the period, after a sacramental service, would restore the chalice to its appointed receptacle..."[554]

In this respect, the Crusades also offer an interesting connection. We have already noted that the lance of Longinus was allegedly found by the Crusaders in Antioch; according to William of Tyre, the vessel of the Last Supper was recovered by the Crusaders in Caesaria in 1101 and brought to San Lorenzo of Genoa, as is also attested by Jacobus de Voragine, archbishop of Genoa and compiler of the Legenda Aurea in the 13th c. This vessel, the "Sacro Catino", was removed to Paris by Napoleon in 1804 and

[553]J.D. Bruce, *The Evolution of the Arthurian Romance*, vol. 1, p. 350.

[554]Ibid., p. 352.

returned in 1814.[555]

In the beginning of the thirteenth century, the Vulgate version of the Grail Romances, a collection in prose following Robert de Boron, will standardize in the most popular version (with over 100 extant manuscripts) the Arthurian canon which includes the origin of the grail, the crowning of Arthur after the adventure of the sword in the stone, his wars, the imprisonment of Merlin by Morgan le Fay, the adventures of his knights, the quest for the Grail, Lancelot's affair with the queen, and Arthur's last battle; although often rambling and repetitious, according to Bruce, sometimes "prolix and monotonous" (perhaps like the 17th-century French romances it inspired), the work includes "amour courtois in its purest and most serious form," and a "compound [of]... the deepest theological and mystical conceptions of...[the] time [with] stories of piracy, of voyages imaginaires, and even, perhaps, farce."[556] The last part, particularly, is marked by a sense of grandeur, fate and tragedy, as the illicit love affair of the queen is tied to the destruction of Arthur's court.[557] Throughout, the patchwork of the Vulgate borrows both from pseudo-chronicle and from romance, and presents, generally, the outline of the story which Mallory will follow in the English *Morte d'Arthur* nearly three hundred years later.

The Byzantino-Christian source of the Grail romances is evident in this work through the long prologue on the arrival of the Grail from the Holy Land to Britain as in

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[555]J.D. Bruce, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance,* vol. 1, pp. 360-362.

[556]Ibid., pp. 417, 391.

[557]Ibid., pp. 431-2.

Robert de Boron's *Joseph.* Although some critics have described this as a later Christianization of previously Pagan material, as we have seen, the material was already Christianized at the time of the composition of Chrétien's original Grail romance. If anything, we might say that the Pseudo-Walter Map of the *Vulgate Cycle* "Catholicized" the romances: fixing the shape of the grail as a dish, this author or group of authors conformed this Byzantine borrowing to the Western custom of offering only bread and no wine at the Mass. Moreover, the shifting of the role of Joseph of Arimathaea to the chaste Josephe, as that of Perceval to the chaste and spiritually perfect Galahad, is in line with the doctrine of the Western church on the celibacy of priests. Nevertheless, the compiler(s) of the Vulgate version did not inject a Pagan work with Christian propaganda, but rather composed their works within the Christian framework and tradition already firmly established, making only minor alterations to conform better to Western tradition.

CHAPTER XV.

1204: THE PASSING OF ALIENOR AND THE CONQUEST OF CONSTANTINOPLE

1. Venice and the Fall of Constantinople

It is symbolic of the end of an era that Alienor, who, as a young queen, was so fascinated by Byzantium, should pass away the year of its sacking by the very knights who would pretend to defend Christianity against the Infidel. Alison Elliott compares the mystical journey of the Saint's Life to a pilgrimage where the pilgrim "has left a Familiar Place, journeyed to a Far Place, and returned once more to the familiar,... in some ways... changed for the better."[558] Ironically, the "pilgrimage" of the Fourth Crusade would have no such results.

Nikitas Chioniates chronicles the pillage and looting of Constantinople at the point where Venice deemed it profitable to send the Crusaders to fight against their Orthodox Christian brethren, this with the implicit approval of Innocent III, the pope who granted absolute remission of sins for this crusade and would later sanction the genocide of the Albigensians.[559] Zorzi outlines the causes of this action: among Byzantium's

[558]Allison Elliott, *Roads to Paradise,* p. 178.

[559]Geanakopoulos notes that Innocent III decreed the opening of an ultimately unsuccessful branch of the University of Paris in Constantinople after the crowning of Baldwin I: was this a propagandistic effort to reverse influences? (Deno Geanakopoulos, *Interaction of the 'Sibling' Byzantine and Western Cultures in the Middle Ages and Italian Renaissance,* p. 12.)

subjects was the growing trading city of Venice. As far back as 810, the rapport between Venice and Byzantium is evident. When Pippin, Charlemagne's son, led an assault on the city, the Venetians declared to him that "We are subjects of the emperor of the Romans, not of yours."[560] Instead, the city, spared an agricultural and feudal lot by her association with Constantinople, became her ambassador: "links with the Frankish empire, formalized by an agreement with Constantinople and later renewed directly between doges and Charlemagne's successors, become such as to make Venice the natural and official go-between for dealings between the two powers."[561] In the 10-11th Century, Venice fought side by side with Byzantium against the hated Normans of Robert Guiscard, who had invaded Italy. As a result of this cooperation, the "bolla d'oro" of 1052 extended Venetian trading privileges to various Byzantine ports and established a Venetian quarter in Constantinople.[562] By the twelfth century, however, Venice's commercial success began to threaten Byzantium: "in the Constantinople of the 12th century public outcry was provoked by the fact that Venetians controlled commerce and armaments to far too large a degree, that they claimed special customs and tariffs and that... they had at their disposal a privileged sector with a church square, foundry and well-equipped docks. All this resulted in the mass arrest and subsequent exile of the Venetians...[563] [as] the 'dearest friends and subjects' were in despotic control of the

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[560]Alvise Zorzi, *Venice: the Golden Age*, (Milan, 1983), p. 13.

[561]Ibid.

[562]Ibid., pp. 93-4.

[563]Ibid., p. 9.

Byzantine economy."[564]

In 1124 the Emperor John Comnenus refused to renew the edict of 1052; this led to the sacking of Rhodes, Samos, Lesbos, Modon and Cephalonia by the Venetians, before he changed his mind. Renewed Norman attacks, however, by Roger II of Sicily, made the two powers reluctant allies.[565] When the Venetians refused to help recapture the Adriatic basin, however, Manuel deprived them of their trading rights, confiscated their property, and put them in prison in 1171, and Andronicus V massacred some remaining Westerners, Pisans and Genoese, in 1182.[566] By 1198, however, a new agreement was opening new markets for the Venetians, and they were anxious to improve relations with the new Byzantine Emperor, Alexius III.[567] Which makes the following events even more incredible: in 1203, the knights of the Fourth Crusade, transported by the Venetians, were persuaded by Alexius' brother to make a brief detour in order to put him on the disputed Byzantine throne. In exchange, his German backers offered 200,000 silver marks for the cause, plus unification of the Orthodox and Catholic faiths.[568]

Although Zorzi, as a Venetian historian, tries to shift much of the blame for the diversion of the Crusade to internal Byzantine politics, the fact remains that the Venetians opportunistically concurred at the very least in the destruction of their competitor for

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[564]Alvise Zorzi, *Venice*, p. 14.

[565]Ibid., p. 96.

[566]Ibid., p. 98.

[567]Ibid., pp. 100-102.

[568]Ibid., p. 102.

economic reasons. Alexius IV, once on the throne, requested of the Crusaders to remain and protect him, as his foreign support made him less popular than his predecessor. He was deposed, however, by Alexius V, who initiated hostilities towards the Crusaders, who, instead of moving on to their true mission, turned back and sacked Constantinople on April 12 and 13, 1204. According to Zorzi, "Art treasures were destroyed or looted. Precious relics (protected by equally precious reliquaries) made their way to Venice together with the four bronze horses from the hippodrome, destined for the façade of the state basilica. Horrified chroniclers describe the orgy of violence and pillage that rocked what had been the most beautiful, richest and most splendid city of Europe."[569]

The former Byzantine Empire was split three ways: a third went to Doge Andrea Dondolo of Venice, who prudently refused the Byzantine throne, a third to the Crusaders, and a third to the Latin Byzantine Empire, with Baldwin of Flanders elected Emperor. Although Venice now enjoyed exclusive trade in the Eastern Mediterranean and good relations with the Ionian Islands, the new lords of Greece, like Villehardouin's grandson in Western Peloponese, met with at best mixed results in attempting to claim territory actually owned by Greeks. Even the Latin Emperor was imprisoned by the Bulgars. By 1261, the Greek Emperor from Nicaea reconquered Constantinople, bringing the Latin Empire to an end.[570]

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[569]Alvise Zorzi, *Venice*, p. 103. One of the undesirable results of this outrage was the loss in the shuffle of the great library of Photius. According to Wilson, Byzantine scholars still had access to the many now lost texts which Photius describes, even up to the sacking of the city, whereas the later commentators of the Paleologian period seem to possess only the texts which we are still familiar with.

[570]Ibid., pp. 104-112.

Thus, by the middle of the thirteenth century, Byzantium would seem to recover from the Westerners' blow but would limp along for another two hundred years, sufficiently weakened so as to be ultimately swallowed up by the Ottoman Empire. Politics aside, however, this period, which lasted well beyond the 50 years in many parts of Byzantium and is known as the Frangokrateia, would make for an interesting cross-pollenation of literary form. In southern Greece in particular, where the Villehardouin clan held on to hegemony until the 1270s, and the Franks until nearly the fourteenth century, immigrant knights and persons of mixed race gradually blended into the population. Thus, Byzantine authors would come into contact with Western literature through the encounter of new immigrants and colorful individuals like Marco Sanado, nephew of the Doge, who protected Naxos from the Turks, and Enrico Pescatore, the Genoese pirate who established himself in Crete,[571] which certainly sparked their imagination. Miller describes the Westerners as "that picturesque and motley crowd of Burgundian, Flemish and Lombard nobles, German knights, rough soldiers of fortune from Cataluna and Navarre, Florentine financiers, Neapolitan courtiers, shrewd Venetian and Genoese merchant princes, and last but not least, the bevy of high-born dames sprung from the oldest families of France who make up, together with the Greek archons and the Greek serfs, the persons of the romantic drama of which Greece was the theatre for 250 years."[572] Zorzi notes the nostalgia many Ionian Islanders still feel for the Venetian era (despite their subsequent annexation by the French, British, and finally Modern Greeks), and Angelos Terzakis' *The*

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[571]Alvise Zorzi, *Venice,* pp. 107-8.

[572]William Miller, *The Latins in the Levant,* (Cambridge, 1964), pp. vii-viii.

Princess Izambo is a fine 20th-century novel offering a romanticized picture of the period of Frankish occupation.

Ironically, as Byzantium was increasingly menaced by the Turks, Venice proved the only outlet for many contemporary Byzantine manuscripts, and many scholars sought refuge there despite her role in weakening their capital: Venice, "the first to have shaken Constantinople to its very foundations, ... had such a wealth of Byzantine qualities, [that she] was still the most bearable place of exile."[573]

2. The Late Byzantine Romance: Original and Western Adaptation

The budding Byzantine literature, by modern standards stagnant in the archaic forms of the twelfth century, springs to life in the thirteenth in the down-to-earth idiom of spoken Greek. Oral tradition, folk tales, Hellenic/Byzantine romances all blend in this new literature, but along with them comes the importation of new romances from France, freely and selectively adapted to modern Greek by Byzantine poets. Frankish influence is discernible in the late romances *Livistros and Rhodamne, Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe, Vellandros and Chrysanza*(14c?) and the French adaptations *Florios and Plazaflora* and *Imperios and Margarona.*

Interestingly, the five original Greek romances of the period, *Achilles, Kallimachos and Chryssorhoe, Vellandros and Chrysanza, Livistros and Rhodamne*, and a Tale of Troy, written between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (which we do not have the

[573]Walter Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages,* p. 275.

space to discuss here), carry on the pattern already established for the romance, but with one significant change: the outcome of these romances is varied, sometimes happy, but sometimes also tragic. According to Beaton, all deal with "a common and limited stock of narrative incidents," and all follow a similar pattern: a prince scorns Eros, but his fate is to fall in love, a love which is now consummated in the midst of adventure. A setback follows: one or both of the lovers is believed to be dead. In three cases the separation is temporary, leading eventually to a reunion. In two cases, however, it proves fatal.[574] This development will be significant for the future of the fictional narrative, where the alternation between happy and sad endings will be standardized.

As to the translations of Old French romances, the *War of Troy, Florios and Platzaflora, Imperios and Margarona, Apollonius of Tyre, Theseid*, and the fragment of the old giant at Arthur's court, an interesting process takes place. Although most Arthurian romances seem to be available in Greece, only works with relevance to Greece, such as the *Roman de Troie*, are actually translated. In some, like *Imperios* or *Florios*, "the story of a royal pair who fall in love after the hero's victory in a tournament, exchange rings, are (or attempt to be) united in secret, are then separated as one... is unwillingly transported to Egypt, and finally reunited after trials to reign as king and queen... would have struck a chord with Greek writers at all conversant with the romance literature in their language... the 'resurrection' of the hero's long-lost wife follows in terms which invite comparisons between the traditional restoration to life found in the

[574]Roderick Beaton, *The Medieval Greek Romance*, pp. 105-6.

Hellenistic romances and the Resurrection."[575] Interestingly, some of these are subsequently published in Venice after the conquest of Constantinople by the Turks.

The study of these texts leads Beaton to some conclusions which to us seem accurate: first, that a great volume of Western literature must have existed in Greece so that the translators could pick and choose, secondly, that they would recast their adaptations to fit the Greek mold more properly, and thirdly, that apparent Western innovations, such as God of Love or the mysterious castle, are actually reflections of earlier borrowings from Hellenistic texts. Beaton traces the description of the God of Love from *Ysminias and Ysmene* to *Vellandros* and *Livistros*: "the prodigious youth, his entire body naked, armed with bow and torch, his legs ending, incongruously mermaid-like, in wings, and seated on a chariot amid the vassals of the earth, is none other than the Dieu d'Amor of twelfth-century French literature and in particular the *Roman de la Rose*."[576] As to references to mysterious castles, often they are the abode of the God of Love, who chastises mortals who do not honor his ways. Thus, "the link between the castle and the central theme of love is securely established in all five romances... "Castle of the heart"...[is] the metaphor of fortifications as the extension of a girl's sexual defenses, made famous in the West by the influential Roman de la Rose already present in Greek almost a century before that poem was written."[577]

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[575]Roderick Beaton, *The Medieval Greek Romance,* pp. 136-7.

[576]Ibid., p. 152. It goes without saying that this god of love is the Eros of classical times; the interest here, however, is in the manner in which these Medieval texts depict him.

[577]Ibid., pp. 158-9.

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Moreover, numerous allegorical works spring up in this period, including the "Tale of Consolation of Good and Bad Fortune", the "Story of Ptocholeous", the "Sinner's Prayer," the "Exile", and the "Drunken Philosopher" and animal stories, like the "Paidiophrastos", the "Poulologos", the "Syntaxarion of Est. Donkey", the "Porililogos", the "Opoonologos". French historiography reflects the experiences of this period, as in Villehardouin's and Robert de Clari's chronicles of the conquest, and the curious *Chronicle of Morea* is written, probably by a French scribe, in a strange Greek dialect abounding in French expressions.[578] Geanakopoulos remarks that "paradoxically,... the establishment of Crusaders among the native Greek population brought the two peoples willy-nilly closer together socially and even culturally."[579]

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[578]According to Lurier, this is a text written by Greek-speaking Franks, settled in Greece after their conquest, with the propagandistic purpose of glorifying the conquering Franks and discrediting the Greeks as treacherous cowards. (See Harold E. Lurier, *Crusaders as Conquerors,* (New York, 1964), pp. 3-64. Typical of its vocabulary are words like "messir" and "congesta". (Wendy Moleas, *The Development of the Greek Language*, (Bristol, 1989), p. 41.) For a more complete treatment of Byzantine linguistic borrowing from the West during this period, see Henry and Renée Kahane, "The Western Impact on Byzantium: the Linguistic Evidence," in *Graeca et Romanica Scripta Selecta*, vol. 3, pp. 227-253.

[579]Deno Geanakopoulos, *Interaction of the 'Sibling' Byzantine and Western Cultures in the Middle Ages and Italian Renaissance*, p. 11.

4. Erotokritos and the Death of Byzantine Literature at the Hands of the Turks

This new literature will die a slow death at the hands of the Turks; the last Byzantine romance, from the outpost of Crete, is the 16th-century *Erotokritos.* Crete is another interesting example of literary cross-influence; drawing on her Byzantine tradition, Crete, under Venetian occupation from 1211 (as part of the Venetian third of the Empire) until the Turkish conquest of 1669, was open to the influences of the French romance, as well as Italian literature from Renaissance to Baroque. According to Holton, "The Cretan Renaissance [was]... the result of an extraordinary cross-fertilization of cultures.. as the sixteenth century... developed a homogeneous character of its own, neither Greek, nor Italian, but Cretan."[580]

The *Erotokritos*, a chivalric romance where the disguised hero must win his bride through jousts and prowess in war, combines a fourteenth-century French prototype with elements from Byzantium and Ariosto to produce an original masterpiece. According to Beaton, "its five-part form, reminiscent of Renaissance drama, and its long speeches probing the inner workings and motives of individual characters reveal it as very much a work of the later Renaissance."[581] With this single masterpiece is formed a precarious bridge between the world of tradition which came to an end with the Turkish occupation and the modern Greek literature after the nineteenth-century war of independence.

[580]David Holton, *Literature and Society in Renaissance Crete*, (Cambridge, 1991), p. 15.

[581]Roderick Beaton, *The Medieval Greek Romance,* p. 205.

Indeed, "With *Erotokritos* the Greek genre of romance/novel reaches a new and sophisticated stage of development in the age of the Renaissance. From origins in antiquity, it has passed through a variety of medieval manifestations to emerge revivified by contact with the West in Renaissance Crete. Simultaneously 'modern' and traditional... the subtle artistry ...[of] Kornaros transformed a medieval French romance into a Greek literary monument of the Renaissance."[582] Holton adds: "it is extremely difficult to disentangle the Greek and Western elements because both traditions depend ultimately on a common inheritance of the clichés of classical antiquity."[583]

Sadly, as Geanakopoulos notes, "after 1453, Greece gradually became a cultural wasteland" with schools closing and scholars seeking refuge in the increasingly sophisticated West.[584] From this moment until the liberation of Greece at the beginning of the nineteenth century no literature remains except the folk songs passed from mouth to mouth, more likely than not by the klephtes who took to the mountains to resist the Turkish yoke. Not until the Dark Ages of the Ottoman Empire were lifted would Greece produce any further literary creations.

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[582]David Holton, *Literature and Society in Renaissance Crete,* p. 237.

[583]Ibid., pp. 207-8.

[584]Deno Geanakopoulos, *Interaction of the 'Sibling' Byzantine and Western Cultures in the Middle Ages and Italian Renaissance*, p. 294.

EPILOGUE

If only for a moment, the civilizations of Eastern and Western Europe seemed to experience in the twelfth century a harmony which was absent from the confrontation and mistrust of previous and subsequent centuries. Their cooperation at that crucial moment, gave birth to a genre, the Medieval romance, which is at the source of subsequent Western fiction writing. Indeed, according to Bruce, "the... prose romances determined... the character of the subsequent prose fiction of the larger sort in France far into the sixteenth century and, to a certain degree, indirectly, beyond."[1]

Bruce sees the direct influence of the romances in Italy, in Boiardo's *Orlando Inamorato* (1486) and the sequel, Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1516), as well as Luigi Alamanni's *Avarchide* (1570) -- an Arthurized *Iliad* -- and, indirectly, in Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* (1581) in their "incoherence, the abrupt transitions, the interweaving of a whole series of narratives that have no vital connection with one another."[2] In Spain, he notes the influence on the chivalric romance of the 13th to 16th c, from *Amadis de Gaula* to *Principes y Caballeros,* and even on Cervantes' *Don Quixote*: "though one of its objects was the extinction of the genre, [it] inherits its

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[1]J.D. Bruce, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance*, vol. 2, p. 39.

[2]Ibid., p. 40. According to Bruce, "Alamanni's... Avarchide (1570), [an] Arthuriz[ed] Iliad,... retains the main outlines of the Homeric epic,... [with]... Lancelot, Tristan, and the rest stalking in the shoes of Achilles, Ajax, etc... On the model of the *Avarchide* a few years later... Torquato Tasso, in his Gerusalemme Liberata (1581), offered to the world a far happier combination of classical and romantic elements."

narrative technique."[3]

With the advent of the Renaissance, and Amyot's elegant translations of Longus' and Heliodorus' romances into French, new generations of Western authors will come in contact with Hellenistic models. Thus Hellenistic as well as Medieval romances will be responsible for directly shaping subsequent narratives. Rabelais will make fun of these compositions, but Racine will draw from them for his characterization, Cervantes will model his last work, *Los Trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*, after them, and even Goethe will later praise Longus as one of the greatest authors of all time. The new pastoral genre, perhaps directly modeled after Longus, includes Sannazaro's *Arcadia* (1504), Montemayor's *Diana* (1559), Cervantes' *Galatea* (1585), and, subsequently, the mammoth works of the French 17th century such as d'Urfé's *Astrée* and de Scudéry's *Grand Cyrus*. Bryant Creel of the University of Tennessee Romance Languages department also points to the connection with "the important strain of modern sentimental romance: Boccaccio's *Fiammetta*, Diego de San Pedro's *Carcel de amor* (1492), and Bernardin Ribeiro's *Menira e moça* (1554)."

Meanwhile, the subsequent English translations will lead to imitations such as Sir Philip Sydney's *Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* with its Heliodorian ellipses and convolutions and a style that will inspire in turn Richardson, Fielding and Dickens, giving birth to the modern novel. *L'Astrée,* the work of his French counterpart, Honoré d'Urfé, will inspire the novels of the précieux, and in turn adventure novels and picaresque, including those of Lesage and Marivaux. Racine's appreciation of ancient

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[3]Ibid., p. 41.

sentimentality will give rise to the psychological novel, à la Mme de la Fayette, but here a problem arises: the vogue in neo-classicism for classical drama resurrects the plot of tragedy and transplants it into fiction. Classical sense of the importance of the unities, motivation, and often the tragic climax affects how the modern "cultivated" public appreciates works, and its expectations. Thus, the well-motivated tragic ending, recalling classical drama perhaps more than late Byzantine romance,[4] will be the yardstick for the quality of a work. For centuries, critics will use neo-classical criteria in evaluating fiction, much to the detriment of the loosely-organized romance; thus, when Dostoyevsky writes his *Crime and Punishment*, Mochulsky dismisses the conclusion based on the redeeming power of love (from symbolic descent into murder and degradation to redemption through Christian/neo-Platonic love) as a sentimental, insincere, tacked-on ending.

Fortunately, no matter what the critics think, the romance is still alive and well thanks to an enormous reading public whose zest for a good story, adventure, and the unexpected remains unquenched. After all, as Curtius notes: "Wie verfährt ein Romanschriftsteller? Er findet einen Helden; verleiht ihm Züge, die unsere Teilnahme zu erwecken vermögen; geleitet ihn durch Verwicklungen der Abenteuersuche, der Liebessuche, der Suche nach Beruf und Berufung; läßt ihn die Menschen- und Weltkenntnis erwerben, die er, der Autor, besitzt; führt ihn in den Hafen der Ehe oder

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[4]Although we have noted some movement in this direction, particularly in tragic endings and some *relatively* compact plots.

in die Reifung des Todes."[5] According to this definition, the modern novel, particularly in its popular form, is merely a refinement of the texts that the present work has considered.

Finally, novelists in newly-liberated Greece will look to Western novels for their models, importing the new developments in characterization, plot cohesion, psychology, etc., creating another artistic unification of East and West. Thus, modern Greek literature will be a mixture of classical, popular and Western elements. The description by Richer of Nobel Prize winner George Seferis is typical: "Séféris est un représentant caractéristique de la 'Génération littéraire de 1930' dont le but est d'appliquer la ou les manières des littératures occidentales à des sujets proprement grecs. Les dons qu'à travers les siècles se firent réciproquement les cultures grecque et française constituent donc une sorte de patrimoine commun du monde de la pensée où vit, où crée, Séféris."[6] His world seems to transcend traditional borders: "Que ce soit parmi les marbres blancs que le soleil anime, ou dans les jardins frais de l'Ile de France, que ce soit en entendant la musique de Rameau, de Debussy, d'Erik Satie, ou dans un petit port des Cyclades; que ce soit encore sur le pont d'un navire aux feux éteints ou sous la tente du désert, il vous murmure des idées, des correspondances, des analogies."[7]

According to Beaton, "the Greek novel, when it reappears after 1834, is imported

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[5]E.R. Curtius, *Kritische Essays zur Europäischen Literatur,* (Bern, 1950), p. 385.

[6]Renée Richer, "Deux aspects du commerce spirituel de la France et de la Grèce," (*Lettres Grecques Modernes*), p. 54.

[7]Ibid., p. 55.

wholesale from the West."[8] We hope that through the present work our reader will take this generalization with one or two grains of salt. It is perhaps significant that, at the end of our timeline, Nikos Kazantzakis creates not only Western-style novels but also poetry: "he failed to accept the fact that his truest gifts lay in prose, and he therefore neglected to develop those gifts above all others... Greece's most successful novelist... denigrated prose as inferior to poetry."[9] His most ambitious work is an epic in verse, a sequel to the *Odyssey*, bringing the odyssey of our composition full circle to the origins of all novels, epics and romances, with the blind bard Homer some 800 years before our era.

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[8]Roderick Beaton, *The Greek Novel: A.D. 1-1985*, p. viii.

[9]In Mario Vitti, *Novel 9*.

CONCLUSIONS

Nearly a century ago, Saintsbury wrote that "despite the vigorous work of recent generations on all literary and historical subjects, no one has yet succeeded, and until someone more patient of investigation than fertile in theory arises, no one is likely to succeed in laying down the exact connection between... Western and... Byzantine literature."[10] Although, despite the lapse of a century, the answer to this puzzle is still not absolutely clear, we hope that our three-hundred-page meditation has shed some light on the matter. Indeed, although no Old French document citing Byzantine romances as its source may ever turn up, if we put together the various pieces of our puzzle, the late Hellenistic works translated into Latin, the apocrypha and Saints' Lives, the twelfth-century Byzantine works, and the various works of travel literature, we see that from our three-pronged approach -- religion, translation, and travel, particularly by Crusaders -- an indisputable picture emerges of Greco-Byzantine influence on the Old French romance.

As this work has attempted to show, the Old French romance of the 12th century was the product of individual imaginations drawing not only from Latin and hypothetical Celtic sources, colored by the sensibility of troubadour poetry, but also from the Byzantine culture encountered during the Crusades. Byzantium impressed the Western authors not only through her exotic luxuries, which are reflected in the descriptions in

[10]George Saintsbury, *The Flourishing of the Romance and the Rise of Allegory*, p. 376.

Western romances, but through her literary heritage as well. By preserving a living knowledge of the Hellenistic romance and its mixture of love, adventure, and the mysterious practices of pre-Christian religion, Byzantium provided the essential spark for the creation of the greatest Medieval romances. Indeed, we have chronicled this development, from the Hellenistic romance inspired by mystery religions to the Christian romance and Saint's Life after the transformation of religion in the Roman Empire, and finally its development into the courtly romance, through the catalyst of the Byzantine Empire, with its opulence and exoticism, but also its renewed interest in the romance genre -- possibly brought about by political decline.

Byzantium's influence, which even suggests an explanation for the enigma of the source of the Grail Romance, was an essential ingredient in the alchemy which was responsible for the transition in the Middle Ages between the ancient and modern romances. Northrop Frye notes this continuity:

> "the romance mode comes as near as literature can to depicting wish-fulfillment dreams. Hence heroes change from the handsome ephebe and beautiful maiden of Greek Romance to the spiritual martyr, the ascetic, and thence to the chivalric knight of medieval courtly romance and finally to the child-hero of many modern romances."[11]

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[11]Allison Elliott, *Roads to Paradise*, p. 181.

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VITA

Leon Stratikis was born in Athens, Greece on December 9, 1964, and emigrated to the United States on July 4, 1973. As a student, he pursued his diverse interests, studying literature, foreign languages, history and political theory, while writing three novels and numerous short stories, magazine and newspaper articles, including a column of political commentary. He received his B.A. from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville in 1985.

As a graduate student, Mr. Stratikis was a teaching assistant in French at the University of Tennessee from 1985 to 1987, also teaching French at Laurel High School in Knoxville. When he received his M.A., he accepted an assistantship in English from the French Ministry of Education, teaching at the Collège de Huningue, and the Collège de Village Neuf in Alsace for the following year, subsequently working as translator in Athens, Greece the following summer. His extensive travel during this trip helped to ferment the theme of his research, as he discovered firsthand how aspects of the cultures of Europe seem to flow across artificial national boundaries, one into the next.

On his return, he pursued his Ph,D. in the new Modern Foreign Languages program at the University of Tennessee, which, in its broad outlook and emphasis on the study of several "national" literatures, made his research possible. He continued his work as Graduate Teaching Associate in French, and also as instructor of Modern Greek for the university's non-credit program, and traveled to various libraries in preparation for his dissertation. He will receive his Ph, D. with this dissertation, which permits the fusion

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